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### The Suffering Love of God: The Tension Between Judgement and Grace in the Pre-Exilic Prophets

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THE SUFFERING LOVE OF GOD: THE TENSION BETWEEN  
JUDGMENT AND GRACE IN THE PRE-EXILIC PROPHETS

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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  
Doctor of Theology

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by

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May 1963

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The primary problem that this study deals with is the relationship between the oracles of judgment and the oracles of salvation in the preaching of the Old Testament prophets. Although the uncompromising oracles declaring complete destruction for Israel and the equally unconditional oracles promising full salvation for Israel seem to be logically contradictory, it is characteristic of the prophetic books that the two types of oracles are found side by side. This lends to the prophetic proclamation a tension that defies a simple resolution. The purpose of this study is to examine this tension between the message of judgment and the message of grace to determine whether there are any factors which resolve the tension. If there are not, then a theological basis for the juxtaposition of the two types of oracles must be found if the unity of the prophetic message is to be maintained.

Scholars have offered a number of different solutions for the seeming contradiction between the message of judgment and the message of grace. The simplest solution is advocated by those scholars who would delete all messages of unconditional salvation found in the pre-exilic prophets on the ground that they were added in post-exilic times to soften the doom announced by the particular prophet. Another solution would ease the sharp contrast between judgment and grace by ascribing either the description of total destruction or that of full salvation (or both) to prophetic exaggeration or traditional cultic phraseology. A third solution to the seeming contradiction between judgment and grace

in the prophetic message amounts to building a bridge between the two and easing the tension in this way. This solution, of course, differs according to the various accents of the different prophets, but three main "bridges" come into use. One such way of relating judgment to salvation is the use of the idea of the remnant: a residue of people survive the judgment and become the nucleus of the people who experience salvation. Another bridge is the use of the idea of a disciplinary judgment which leads the people to see the error of their ways; their repentance then brings the era of salvation for them. A third device used to relate judgment and salvation is the idea of a purifying judgment; this judgment purges out the sinners of the people and leaves a purified residue to experience salvation. All three of these "bridges" have the effect of resolving the tension between the message of judgment and that of grace. This study examines all these attempts to establish a relationship between judgment and grace that is free from tension and concludes that none of them has any real basis in the prophetic message.

It is therefore the purpose of this study to defend the thesis that the juxtaposition of the message of total judgment and that of full grace has a theological basis. There is a great tension between judgment and grace; yet these two seemingly opposed items have a deep unity in the nature of Yahweh. Therefore the ultimate purpose of this study is to determine the prophetic understanding of the nature of Yahweh. The conclusion reached and supported throughout is that it is the suffering love of Yahweh which forms the basis of the message of both judgment and grace which the prophets proclaim. Yahweh works in both judgment and grace to accomplish his purpose of salvation for his people. The tension

between these two, however, points to a tension in Yahweh himself between his wrath and his love, a tension that involves suffering for Yahweh. The issue of this suffering love is the salvation of Israel.

The procedure followed in this study is to examine the prophets individually to determine the full import of the total message and the particular emphases of each. However, to give unity to the study the same basic approach is used in each case, modified to fit the particular prophet under discussion. First the call of the prophet is examined to determine the basic outlines of his message as Yahweh revealed it to him at his call. Then his oracles are studied to show that the prophet proclaimed judgment in all its harshness and grace in its complete efficacy. It is demonstrated that the prophet had no ideas to soften the tension between judgment and grace but rather that he based their unity on the divine activity itself. The personal involvement of each prophet in the work of his calling is examined. It is seen that the prophet suffered in the tension of the judgment and grace he had to proclaim, and that this suffering was a witness to the nature of Yahweh. Finally, the prophetic witness to the nature of Yahweh is studied, showing that the prophets, each in his own way, testified to the suffering in Yahweh caused by the conflict between his wrath and his love. This was the ultimate basis of their proclamation of salvation for the people to whom they also proclaimed judgment.

This study is intended to be representative of the message of the pre-exilic canonical prophets. The investigation is limited to the writings of four of the most important prophets of this period: Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah. The message of Isaiah is considered to be included

in the first thirty-nine chapters of the book of Isaiah. The study is limited to these four prophets for two reasons. It is felt that a study of this kind, which attempts to determine the basic theology of each prophet, must examine the prophet's message thoroughly to achieve that goal. The second reason is that these four prophets are fully representative of pre-exilic prophecy. Two of them prophesied primarily to the northern kingdom of Israel (Amos and Hosea), and the other two spoke their message mainly to Judah. Furthermore, these prophets cover the era from the beginning of canonical prophecy to the deportation of Judah into exile.

A synthetic, theological approach is used in this investigation. Full use is made of critical, linguistic and historical studies; yet the whole of the prophet's message is synthesized to discover his main theological accents. Because of this, at times specific critical problems can only be referred to in passing or omitted altogether unless they are particularly relevant to the theological message of the prophet. This does not discount the critical problems but presupposes them.

A brief summary of the major findings in each of the chapters follows. In the second chapter, it is concluded that Amos' primary theological accent is the wrathful love of God. His four inaugural visions revealed to him that Yahweh acts both in grace and in judgment. He accented the side of judgment especially because the people had perverted their election into something that would protect them no matter what they did. Amos reminded them that precisely because they were Yahweh's elected people they would suffer judgment. He held out the possibility of repentance as long as Yahweh was still speaking to them through his prophets. But he used the idea of the remnant only to show the completeness

of the destruction that was coming on the people. Yet his knowledge of the nature of Yahweh makes it probable that he did indeed author the oracle of salvation at the close of his book, for he knew from his visions that in the midst of death there was life in Yahweh. He briefly witnessed to his own suffering in his prophetic office and also to God's suffering in the destruction of his people. |

Chapter three finds that the call of Hosea revealed God's total programme for Israel. Just as Hosea was bidden to marry a harlot, give her children names that imply doom, and then, when she would leave him, to go and love her once more, so God acts with his people Israel both in judgment and in grace. The primary theological accent of Hosea's oracles is the rejected love of Yahweh, which leads to hatred of his people when they demonstrate that they are enslaved to a sinful condition. It is found that Yahweh's judgment on Israel was not intended to be disciplinary; Hosea again and again documented the fact that nothing could cause this rebellious people to repent. The judgment was to be complete; and yet Hosea bore witness that Yahweh would step in with his free love and recreate the people from the midst of judgment. Hosea's involvement in his prophetic office caused him suffering, which Yahweh expressly intended to be a witness of his own suffering in his involvement with Israel. Finally, Hosea lifted the veil of Yahweh's heart and revealed the terrible struggle going on there between his wrath and his love, out of which comes the salvation of Israel, based particularly on Yahweh's own holiness.

Chapter four concludes that Isaiah's major theological accent was the holy love of Yahweh. His inaugural vision revealed all the major accents of his message to Israel: he himself was destroyed and recreated

by Yahweh's holy love, and he learned that the same thing must happen to the people. Even the last tenth of the nation was to be destroyed, and then Yahweh would recreate them in his grace. It is clear in Isaiah's message that Yahweh has a plan he is carrying out for the ultimate salvation of Israel, and this plan includes both judgment and grace. His "strange work" in destroying Israel is found to contain no elements of a purifying judgment; the whole nation is dross and must be destroyed. His use of the idea of the remnant takes on a dialectical character, expressing both complete destruction and recreating grace from Yahweh. There is some evidence of Isaiah's personal suffering in his prophetic task, and he hints at a similar suffering caused for Yahweh because of the necessity to destroy the people.

Chapter five finds that the main theological motif of Jeremiah's message is the painful love of Yahweh. The call of Jeremiah invited him, as a specially consecrated prophet, to share in the divine activity of both destroying the people and rebuilding them; this became the leitmotiv of his entire message. He gave full play to Yahweh's activity of destroying his sinful people, but he always left the door open for the repentance of the people and the subsequent "repentance" of Yahweh. Yet the sinful habitus of the people makes it clear that the judgment was not to be a disciplinary judgment but a full destruction. At the same time Jeremiah witnesses that Yahweh will step in precisely in the midst of the full destruction to recreate his people (both kingdoms). A primary accent of the book of Jeremiah is Jeremiah's own suffering, reported both in his confessions and in his biography. It is plain that the report of his suffering in his prophetic office was meant to point to the suffering

of Yahweh himself. Yahweh's suffering is likewise described with much fervor, and the suggestion is that precisely out of Yahweh's pain comes the salvation of his people.

Chapter six contains a summary of the main theological facts emerging from the previous chapters, together with conclusions drawn from these facts. Additional discussions establish the validity of speaking of the passibility of God and suggest that the prophetic witness to the suffering love of God supports a view of Christ's atonement that would place the accent on the conflict between God's love and his wrath.

## CHAPTER II

### AMOS: GOD'S WRATHFUL LOVE

#### Amos' Message Revealed in His Call

Amos does not relate any information regarding his call by Yahweh beyond the possible allusion in Amos 3:8 and the statement to Amaziah in 7:14-15. These two passages reveal little concerning the content of his prophetic message. However, the visions recorded in 7:1-9:4 seem to be connected with Amos' call to his prophetic office. These five visions have a great deal to say about the content of Amos' message, outlining its most significant features. Weiser remarks, "Für Amos sind die Gesichte persönliche Erlebnisse, bei denen es sich um die Erkenntnis dessen handelt, was den charakteristischen Grundgedanken seiner gesamten Profetie bildet."<sup>1</sup> If this is the case, then one can expect to find in Amos' visions the basic features of the nature of Yahweh as it was revealed to him, along with the outline of Yahweh's dealings with his people, whether in judgment or in grace. Thus these visions can serve as a guide in attempting to determine Amos' view, if any, of the relationship between judgment and grace in Yahweh's dealings with his people. The oracles in the rest of the book can be expected to enlarge and expound what was revealed to Amos in the visions.

The five visions can be divided into two groups by the simple

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<sup>1</sup>Artur Weiser, Die Profetie des Amos (Giessen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann, 1929), p. 59. On this point see also J. Philip Hyatt, Prophetic Religion (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1947), p. 40.

observation that in the first two (7:1-3 and 7:4-6) the judgment on the people is averted by Amos' intercession, while in the last three visions (7:7-9; 8:1-3; and 9:1-4) there is only the stark sentence of doom. In the first two visions Amos sees Yahweh sending plagues against Israel, first locusts (7:1) and then a judgment by fire (7:4). He pleads with Yahweh on behalf of Israel, appealing to Yahweh's compassion for Jacob, who is too small to stand in the face of such plagues: mî yāqûm ya'acôb kî qāṭôn hû. In both cases Yahweh hearkens to Amos' plea and repents concerning what he has proposed to do (niham ynhw). He utters the words signaling one more postponement of divine judgment: "It shall not be" (lô' tihyê). However, in the last three visions there is no hint of any intercession by Amos. Now Yahweh does not send plagues, but he himself comes into the midst of his people in judgment (7:8,9; 8:2; 9:1).<sup>2</sup> He indicates that there will no longer be any forgiveness for Israel (7:8; 8:2),<sup>3</sup> and the sentence rings out: "The end has come upon my people Israel" (8:2: bā' haqqēs ʾel ʿammî yisrāʾēl). (The last vision (9:1-4) is certainly meant to imply total annihilation for Israel; even those who escape the judgment will be pursued by Yahweh and killed.

Thus within the visions there are two radically different pictures

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<sup>2</sup>Wilhelm Rudolph, "Gott und Mensch bei Amos: Bemerkungen zu Amosbuch," Imago Dei: Beiträge zur theologischen Anthropologie Gustav Krüger zum siebzigsten Geburtstag am 29. Juni 1932 dargebracht, edited by Heinrich Bornkamm (Giessen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann, 1932), p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>The expression ʿābar lē is usually used in the sense of forgiving transgression; see Richard S. Cripps, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos (Second edition; London: S. P. C. K., 1955), p. 226; and Artur Weiser, Das Buch der zwölf kleinen Propheten, in Das Alte Testament Deutsch, edited by Volkmar Hertrich and Artur Weiser (3. Auflage; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959), XXIV, 185.

of Yahweh's relation with his people. On the one hand, he changes his mind and withdraws the proposed punishment; on the other hand, he relentlessly carries through total destruction on his people, without even a remnant to survive. Here are grace and judgment in stark contrast; what is the relationship between them? |

Some scholars hold that the visions of Amos represent his own development from an attitude of hope for Israel to a conviction that Yahweh must completely destroy them. This solution does away with the tension between judgment and grace by referring the visions to different periods within Amos' own spiritual development. Grace may have been his own patriotic hope for Israel, but he was compelled by Yahweh to abandon this and instead proclaim unmitigated doom. Würthwein, for example, feels that the visions reflect a change in Amos from a Heilsnabi to an Unheilsprophet. During his early period he was a nabi, pronouncing judgment on foreign nations (1:3-2:3) but salvation for Israel; when he saw God's plan for the future, however, he had to become a prophet of doom.<sup>4</sup> Hertzberg believes that the first two visions show an "innerer Widerstand" in Amos, arising out of his love for the people. So long as he only sees

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<sup>4</sup>Ernst Würthwein, "Amos-Studien," Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, LXII (1950), 19ff., 28ff., 35ff. Würthwein does suggest, however, that Amos' function as both a Heilsnabi and an Unheilsprophet corresponds to the nature of Yahweh, who wishes to save his people but now must punish them. Among others who feel that Amos first hoped the people would repent but later abandoned this hope are Martin Buber, The Prophetic Faith, translated from the Hebrew by Carlyle Witton-Davies (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), pp. 105-6; and William Rainey Harper, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea, in The International Critical Commentary, edited by Charles Briggs, Samuel Driver and Alfred Plummer (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), XXIII, cxx.

the visions, he can still utter spontaneous pleas for the people, for he has not yet been called as Yahweh's prophet. However, as soon as Yahweh speaks (in the last three visions), Amos becomes merely the proclaimer of Yahweh's word. "Ist jedoch die Donnerstimme des Gerichts erklingen, hat 'Jahve geredet,' dann gibt's nur noch eine Möglichkeit: 'weissagen,' Gottes Stimme zu der seinen machen!" Amos then sees himself simply "als Jahves Sprachrohr, das ist alles."<sup>5</sup> Watts also finds that the visions reflect a chronological development; Amos recorded his visions "to demonstrate how his distinctive message was formed and to justify such a drastic prophecy." However, according to Watts, the development is not only in Amos' understanding but also in the message itself, showing a progressive fixation in God's intentions in the light of the response of the people. Watts finds that three periods in Amos' career are reflected in his visions. In the first period his message involved warning and pleading with the people to repent. In the second period the judgment was broader but still restrained by intercession. But in the third period God finally suspended the normal functions of the covenant relation with its possibility of intercession and forgiveness.<sup>6</sup> Thus the visions record the critical turning points in Amos' ministry.

All these solutions to the seeming contradiction between the two sets of visions have a common starting point: they are based on the

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<sup>5</sup>H. W. Hertzberg, Prophet und Gott: Eine Studie zur Religiosität des vorexilischen Prophetentums (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1923), pp. 22-3, 57, 68-9.

<sup>6</sup>John D. W. Watts, Vision and Prophecy in Amos: 1955 Faculty Lectures Baptist Theological Seminary Rüslikon/zh, Switzerland (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958), pp. 22-5, 49.

assumption that the grace reflected in the first set of visions and the judgment in the second set cannot be simultaneous. There must be either a development in Amos' understanding of God's intention, or a development in God's own intention, or perhaps both.

This type of solution, however, overlooks several important factors in the visions. There is nothing to suggest that all or some of the visions came prior to Amos' call,<sup>7</sup> or that they were spread throughout his ministry.<sup>8</sup> There is no hint that the second set of visions is more valid for Amos' message than the first set. It is true that Yahweh speaks absolutely in the second set of visions ("The end has come"), and Amos must proclaim this. But Yahweh also speaks absolutely in the first visions ("It shall not be"), and Amos as his prophet must also proclaim this. The first two visions can hardly reflect a wrong attitude of Amos toward the people, for his intercession is successful and Yahweh repents of his intended judgment. The important thing is not that Amos pleads for the people, but that Yahweh is willing to change his intention.<sup>9</sup> By

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<sup>7</sup>That the visions came prior to Amos' call is held by Hertzberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-23; and Weiser, *Das Buch der zwölf kleinen Propheten*, p. 182. But Gerhard von Rad, *Theologie des alten Testaments* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1960), II, 141-42, takes all five visions in connection with Amos' call.

<sup>8</sup>Cripps, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-99, points out that the visions may have come at intervals during several months, from the locust larvae in the spring to the gathering of the late summer fruit. This is quite plausible, but there still is no need to dissociate them from Amos' call or to suppose a development from one vision to the next.

<sup>9</sup>Arvid S. Kapelrud, *Central Ideas in Amos* (Oslo: I Kommissjon Hos H. Aschehoug & Co. [W. Nygaard], 1956), p. 52. The idea of Yahweh repenting of his intention is found elsewhere in the Old Testament (Ex. 32:12-14; 2 Sam. 24:16; Jer. 18:10), although the possibility of this is apparently denied (Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29).

changing his intention Yahweh places the divine stamp of approval on Amos' intercession. There is no suggestion that the people have turned from their sins and thus called forth Yahweh's grace. Rather the first two visions express the truth that Yahweh is a forgiving God, just as the last three visions establish the truth that Yahweh is a God who sends complete destruction on his sinful people. The short description of Amos' commission (7:14-15) shows the mercy of Yahweh even as he threatens his people with destruction: "Go, prophesy to my people (עַמִּי) Israel." Yahweh is still willing to send a messenger to speak his words to his people; he has not yet cast them off completely.

Thus it seems best to conclude that the visions of Amos do not show any development either in Amos' understanding of the divine purpose or in Yahweh's intention for the people. Rather the visions show two aspects of Yahweh's nature, wrath and love, made real for Israel in judgment and grace. The judgment and the grace stand in sharp contrast; yet both are there, and the visions do not resolve the tension. Rudolph supports this conclusion:

Das Sichgereuenlassen ist doch genau so Gottes Tun wie nachher das Zerstoren und Dreinschlagen. Hier ist nirgends ein "Gott nach Menschenweise," sondern Gott ist auch für Amos der zürnende und gnädige Gott zugleich.<sup>10</sup>

So there is a Doppelseitigkeit of Yahweh's nature as it is revealed to Amos in his visions, indicating that both judgment and grace come into play in his dealings with his people. The one does not cancel out the other, nor is the effect of the one softened by the existence of the other.

Aber diese Unheilsweissagung in der gegebenen Lage bricht nichts von der Tatsache ab, dass Jahwe nach wie vor ein gnädiger Gott ist,

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<sup>10</sup>Op. cit., p. 26.

auch wenn er jetzt nicht Gnade walten lassen kann. Umgekehrt: der Mann, der in einer drohenden Plage das Strafgericht über Israel nahen sieht ("vergib"), kennt den zürnenden Gott, auch wenn er sich an seine Gnade wendet.<sup>11</sup>

The inaugural visions of Amos, then, show both the grace and the judgment which Yahweh uses in dealing with his people, and full play is given to both. The grace is unconditional: "So wie Amos bedingungslos um Gottes Gnade gebeten hat, so gibt Gott auch ohne Bedingung seine Vergebung."<sup>12</sup> The judgment is unconditional: "The end has come upon my people Israel" (8:2). The tension between judgment and grace is not eased by any idea of the people's repentance, or by a hint of a disciplinary or purifying judgment, or by the survival of a remnant. From his inaugural visions Amos received the basic elements of the message he was to proclaim to Israel. Allowing for the fact that he would naturally emphasize one side or the other depending on the situations in which he would utter his oracles, one should expect that Amos would proclaim Yahweh as the one who comes into the midst of his people in both judgment and grace.

#### Election: Promise and Responsibility

Yahweh sent Amos as a prophet to his elected people. Amos was fully aware of the special relationship which Yahweh had formed between himself

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 26-27. Weiser, Die Profetie des Amos, pp. 72-73, feels that the two sets of visions show a development in Amos; however, he also states that the two sets of visions point to two different sides of the divine reality; see Das Buch der zwölf kleinen Propheten, p. 186. Cf. also Hyatt, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>12</sup>Volkmar Hertrich, Amos der Prophet Gottes (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1941), p. 71.

and the people of Israel.<sup>13</sup> But he saw what the people of Israel had forgotten, namely, that election by the God of grace and judgment is both a wonderful and a terrible thing: "Only you have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will visit all your iniquities upon you" (3:2). Election was a two-sided thing; it meant promise, but it also meant responsibility.

Amos was completely at home in the exodus tradition of Israel's election. In 2:9-10 he refers to Yahweh's mighty acts in bringing the people out from Egypt, leading them forty years in the wilderness, and giving them the land of the Amorites as their possession. Israel's existence was solely due to Yahweh's grace in choosing them, to "know" them alone of all the nations of the earth (3:2). No reason is given for the election of Israel:

Erwählung ist ihm [Amos] die freie Tat des souveränen Gottes, der Israel für seine Zwecke erwählt hat und nicht gebunden ist an die menschlichen Interessen des Volkes, sondern gerade in der Erwählung die Geltung seines erhabenen Willens zum Ausdruck gebracht hat.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Whether Amos spoke only to the northern kingdom of Israel or whether he included Judah as an object of his message is a debated question. Julian Morgenstern, Amos Studies. I (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1941), pp. vii, 172ff., holds that Amos spoke only to northern Israel, delivering his entire message at Bethel in a half hour, shortly before dawn on new year's day, the day of the fall equinox, 751 B. C. It is more likely that Amos' message was intended for Judah also (cf. 2:4ff.; 3:1b; 5:5c; 6:1; 8:14c; 9:11); so Cripps, op. cit., p. 150; Robert Gordis, "The Composition and Structure of Amos," Harvard Theological Review, XXXIII (October, 1940), 241ff.; and W. S. McCullough, "Some Suggestions About Amos," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXII (1953), 249, who thinks Amos spent part of his ministry in Judah.

<sup>14</sup>Weiser, Das Buch der zwölf kleinen Propheten, pp. 142-44. See also Norman H. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament (London: The Epworth Press, 1944), p. 135. Cripps, op. cit., p. 335, however, feels that it is "doubtful whether Amos' words to the people [3:2] implied or admitted the principle that his God--to their own good--had chosen Israel." This position is quite untenable in the light of 2:9-10.

The election of Israel was pure grace on Yahweh's part; on Israel's part it involved both promise and responsibility. The promise came through the covenant relationship with Yahweh in which he continually showed steadfast love to his chosen people. But this covenant relationship implied a response on the part of the people: "Within the covenant hesed was to be the 'flex' in God and 'the reflex' in Israel."<sup>15</sup> To be Yahweh's elected people meant to serve as the means through which Yahweh would carry out his purposes for the world. "To be chosen, said Amos, is not to be pampered; it is to shoulder double responsibility."<sup>16</sup> For this reason Yahweh had a right to expect his elected people to live up to his ethical demands (2:6-8), to worship him alone in cultic purity (5:4ff.), and to "know" him as he knew them (cf. 3:10). It was a privilege for Israel to be the agent for carrying out Yahweh's purposes; Israel was not elected for her own sake but ultimately for Yahweh's sake.

The Israel of Amos' day had forgotten the full meaning of their election. They had the firm conviction that Yahweh had become their national god by electing them; thus they could placate him with their cultic practices observed by rote (4:4-5; 5:5,21-22), and he would be ever in their midst (5:14b). It is probably because of the people's perverted view of the covenant that Amos makes no explicit mention of it,

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<sup>15</sup>Carl G. Howie, "Expressly for Our Time: the Theology of Amos," Interpretation, XIII (1959), 274.

<sup>16</sup>John Bright, The Kingdom of God: the Biblical Concept and Its Meaning for the Church (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953), p. 64. Cf. also Cripps, op. cit., p. 24; Rudolph, op. cit., p. 26; Howie, op. cit., p. 281; and H. Wheeler Robinson, Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1946), p. 156.

even though he evaluates the people's sin in the light of the exodus tradition (2:9-19). Bright thinks that the tradition of the covenant of Yahweh with the patriarchs contributed to the popular false idea of the election:

Indeed, it seems that a perverted recollection of the patriarchal covenant, which consisted in Yahweh's unconditional promises for the future, had virtually overlaid the Sinaitic covenant in the popular mind.<sup>17</sup>

Whether this is true or not, it seems that the basic job Amos had to do was to jolt the people out of their complacent assurance that their relationship with God was something that stood for all time, regardless of their own role in this covenant. As Hertrich remarks,

Die ganze Verkündigung des Amos richtet sich gegen diese Auffassung von Bund und Erwählung, in der aus der Sache Gottes eine Sache der Menschen gemacht wird, in der das, was allein von Gott in freier Gnade je und dann geschenkt werden kann, angesehen wird als etwas, über das Menschen mit ihren Massen und ihrem Wissen verfügen.<sup>18</sup>

The people based everything on the grace which Yahweh shows in his dealing with his people, and they had forgotten that he also comes in judgment. It was this reverse side of the election coin that Amos had to proclaim.

Amos 3:2 presents the great "Logik der Gerechtigkeit":<sup>19</sup> "Only you have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will visit all

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<sup>17</sup>John Bright, A History of Israel (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959), pp. 243-44.

<sup>18</sup>Op. cit., p. 11. See also John Bright, The Kingdom of God, pp. 63-64; von Rad, op. cit., p. 148; George Adam Smith, The Book of the Twelve Prophets: Commonly Called the Minor (Revised edition; New York: Harper & Brothers, [1928]), I, 99-100; J. A. Sanders, The Old Testament in the Cross (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1961), p. 70.

<sup>19</sup>Hertrich, op. cit., p. 34.

your iniquities upon you." Amos does not deny the election of Israel; rather, it is precisely on the ground of the election that he announces the coming judgment. The verb yāda' as used here does not refer to Yahweh's knowing Israel and so knowing her sins; it is used in the sense of the special, gracious love which Yahweh showed toward Israel in electing her. Weiser offers the suggestion that this verse represents a popular saying which Amos took over and used against those who opposed his message. In Weiser's view, Amos merely inserted the word ʔepqōd in 3:2b in order to twist the meaning of the saying against the popular view of the election. In place of ʔepqōd was perhaps a word like ʔa'abîr ("I will forgive"; cf. 7:8 and 8:2). Thus the popular saying read: "Only you have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will forgive you all your iniquities."<sup>20</sup> This is an attractive suggestion; it certainly would have been effective. It does not detract from the significance of the "therefore" (ʔal kēn) to suppose that this word had been embodied in a popular saying. It was quite valid to draw from the election the conclusion that Yahweh would forgive the sins of his people (cf. Ex. 34:6). That is one side of the election. But Amos uses the same "therefore" to draw the other conclusion: "Therefore I will visit all your iniquities upon you." Both conclusions are based on Yahweh's election of Israel; however, one conclusion becomes invalid when it is stressed to the exclusion of the other. Amos was applying a much-needed corrective to the popular view of election. He said, "To be drawn into a uniquely intimate relationship with such a God was to be uniquely

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<sup>20</sup>Weiser, Die Profetie des Amos, pp. 119-21.

exposed to the devouring fire of that righteousness."<sup>21</sup> Since the people had perverted their election and had made it serve their own ends, they would have to bear the unique judgment that comes to the elected people from the God of the election.

Amos 9:7 is closely related to 3:2. At first there seems to be a contradiction here. Although in 3:2 Yahweh said that he had "known" only Israel of all the nations, in 9:7 he says:

Are you not like the Ethiopians to me,  
O people of Israel, is the oracle of Yahweh;  
did I not bring Israel up from the land of Egypt,  
and the Philistines from Caphtor  
and Aram from Kir?

This statement, like 3:2, should be seen against the background of the controversy between Amos and the people. They were charging him with heresy in prophesying that Yahweh could and would cast off his own elected people; they harked back to the exodus tradition (cf. 2:9-10) to prove that Israel had been elected to a special position by Yahweh and would ever retain this position. Amos admits that Yahweh had indeed brought Israel up from the land of Egypt—but this was no more than he had done for any number of other nations, the Ethiopians, the Philistines and the Syrians.<sup>22</sup> The fact that Yahweh has a friendly interest in these enemies of Israel is surprising enough; but to make them "elected" nations

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<sup>21</sup>Hughell E. W. Fosbroke, "The Book of Amos," The Interpreter's Bible, edited by George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Cokesbury Press, 1953), VI, 768. Cf. also von Rad, op. cit., pp. 148, 189; Martin Buber, op. cit., p. 99; and Th. C. Vriezen, An Outline of Old Testament Theology, translated from the Dutch second edition by S. Neuijen (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), p. 359.

<sup>22</sup>Weiser, Das Buch der zwölf kleinen Propheten, pp. 199-200, favors the view that this passage presupposes a discussion in which the people had argued from a false view of the election.

on a par with Israel is to revoke Israel's special place.

The passage does not, however, contradict 3:2. The explanation of 9:7 is not merely that Yahweh is the lord of all history, even though this is true.<sup>23</sup> Amos is not denying Israel's unique election, but he is saying that they have sold their right to their elected position. Their election was actually one event in history, and if the people refuse to respond to their election with faith in the electing God, then it remains only one event in general world history, on the same level as other such events. Only in faith does history become Heilsgeschichte; only if the people respond with faith and obedience can that historical event become their election as a unique people. Thus these two passages, 3:2 and 9:7, show the tension involved in Israel's election. Hertrich remarks, "Gerade in dem Nebeneinander von 3:2 and 9:7 wird die ganze Dialektik des prophetischen Zeugnisses von der Erwählung offenbar."<sup>24</sup>

Other passages in Amos bear out this radical view of Israel's election. The oracles against foreign nations are so constructed that every Israelite could nod his head as each respective judgment was ticked off: Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, and even Judah. But Israel receives no special favor from their God, and the same sentence the other nations received is also theirs: "For three transgressions of Israel,

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<sup>23</sup>Christopher R. North, The Old Testament Interpretation of History (London: The Epworth Press, 1946), pp. 72ff.

<sup>24</sup>Op. cit., pp. 33-34, 81. Adolphe Lods, The Prophets and the Rise of Judaism, translated by S. H. Hooke (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1955), p. 87, feels that Amos is hinting in 9:7 "that, though the nation fall, Jahweh will still remain, and that, to realize his plans for humanity, he may make use of another people." However, this does not appear to be the main emphasis of the passage.

and for four, I will not revoke the punishment" (2:6). Their election is annulled because they did not live up to its responsibilities and instead profaned Yahweh's holy name (2:6-8). Yahweh had set his eyes upon his people for good<sup>25</sup> when he brought them out from Egypt; but now he, the same covenant God, turns against them in judgment: "And I will set my eyes upon them for evil and not for good" (9:4). The same idea is expressed in 4:12. The fact that Yahweh was Israel's God was what gave them their confidence that no evil would come upon them. But it is precisely their God who comes to judge them: "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!" And Yahweh, for his part, continues to call Israel "my people" even when he is destroying them (7:8,15; 8:2; 9:10). So the "therefore" of Amos 3:2 is given full weight in Amos' preaching: because Israel is the elected people, therefore Yahweh will punish her.

Yet this is not the full story, even in Amos. The other side of the election is still valid; grace is still effective, even if it is in a radically different form from that which popular belief had pictured. The God of the election, not some evil demon, punishes the people. The nation that falls under judgment is still the elected nation, and in the midst of punishment a ray of hope appears--not hope that the judgment may be averted, but hope that Yahweh will recreate his people out of the judgment. "Unter dem Nein klingt verborgen das Ja."<sup>26</sup> Rowley goes so far as to say that God's punishment on his people is the fruit of his

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<sup>25</sup>The phrase, "To set one's eyes upon someone" (šim ʿenayim ʿal), usually implies a good purpose; as such it may have been associated with the election in popular thought. Cf. Gen. 44:21; Jer. 39:12; 40:4; 24:6.

<sup>26</sup>Hertrich, op. cit., p. 12.

love, as he tries to bring the people back to himself through discipline.

According to Rowley, in Amos 3:2,

the discipline is the corollary of the election, and the proof of the divine love. It is not simply because God is just that He punishes Israel's sins; it is rather because He is gracious that He seeks to chasten her for her profit.<sup>27</sup>

The idea that God disciplines Israel through punishment is certainly found in Amos (cf. 4:6-11). However, there is no indication that Yahweh is ever successful in awakening a response in his people by disciplining them. It is more likely that Amos' idea of Israel's election contained the same features that he had seen in his visions: Yahweh deals with his people in judgment and grace without any compromise between the two. The unqualified statements of judgment and grace for the elected people stand side by side: "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!" (4:12); "I will plant them upon their land, and they shall never again be plucked up out of the land which I have given them, says Yahweh, your God" (9:15). Or again: "The end has come upon my people Israel" (8:2); "I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel" (9:14).

It can only be concluded that there are two sides to the idea of the election as found in Amos, corresponding to the two aspects of Yahweh's nature as he acts in judgment and in grace. Because of the people's perverted view of the election, Amos laid more stress on the side of judgment. Yet the "Doppelseitigkeit des Erwählungsgedankens"<sup>28</sup> is there, showing the tension that exists in the idea of the election.

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<sup>27</sup>H. H. Rowley, The Biblical Doctrine of Election (London: Lutterworth Press, 1950), p. 53.

<sup>28</sup>Rudolph, op. cit., p. 27.

## Yahweh Comes in Judgment

The last three of Amos' inaugural visions showed Amos that Yahweh was coming in judgment. Amos did not mince any words in proclaiming this terrifying message to Israel; indeed, it is the overriding theme of the oracles that have been recorded in the book that bears his name. His message was strange to the ears of the people, even though there had been prophets before Amos who had proclaimed judgment on the people. For Israel knew that Yahweh was coming; but the people expected him to come in grace rather than in judgment. Amos had the task of correcting their perverted view of Yahweh by announcing their doom.

In the faith of Israel, the idea of Yahweh's coming was very early bound up with the idea of the yôm yhw, the day of Yahweh. Amos speaks of the day of Yahweh as if it were well-known to his hearers,<sup>29</sup> so the idea must have originated some time before Amos. Scholars have long debated the question of the origin of the day of Yahweh, together with its relationship with Hebrew eschatology, without arriving at any consensus of opinion. Gressmann, for example, argued that the idea of the yôm originated in very ancient popular eschatology, where Heil and Unheil were bound up in a unit.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, von Rad feels that the day of Yahweh comprises a pure event of war and arises out of the

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<sup>29</sup>Besides speaking of the yôm yhw in 5:20, Amos makes references to "that day" (hayyôm hahû) in 2:16; 8:3,9,13. It seems likely that these oracles also belong in the sphere of the day of Yahweh.

<sup>30</sup>Hugo Gressmann, Der Messias (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1929), p. 82.

tradition of Yahweh's holy wars at the time of the Israelite amphictyony; the prophetic descriptions of the day contain many expressions and concepts which derive from the ancient holy wars.<sup>31</sup> The problem of the origin of the day cannot be dealt with at length here. However, from Amos' oracles it seems that the day of Yahweh, at least at his time, may have had some connection with a cultic festival (cf. 8:3,9-10; note also the close connection between 5:20 and 5:21ff.). Weiser feels the day of Yahweh was associated with the annual covenant renewal ceremony at the new year's festival.<sup>32</sup> This would provide a good background for Amos' radical reorientation of the day of Yahweh.

The people of Amos' day thought of the day of Yahweh as a time of salvation for Israel, a day for which they were longing (5:18). Some scholars hold that the popular idea of the day of Yahweh did include judgment for Israel.<sup>33</sup> It is more likely that the people thought of this day as the day when Yahweh, the national god of Israel, would do battle against the other nations and gain the victory over them. In this way

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<sup>31</sup>Gerhard von Rad, "The Origin of the Concept of the Day of Yahweh," Journal of Semitic Studies, IV (April, 1959), 103-08. The most complete summary of the important schools of thought on this question is to be found in Ladislav Černý, The Day of Yahweh and Some Relevant Problems (V. Praze: Nákladem Filosofické Faculty University Karlovy, 1948), passim.

<sup>32</sup>Die Profetie des Amos, pp. 219, 308. Watts, op. cit., pp. 74ff., goes so far as to describe the probable ritual at the sanctuary of Bethel, with the day of Yahweh being both the high point of the festival and God's expected goal in history.

<sup>33</sup>Kapelrud, op. cit., pp. 73-74, argues that judgment on Israel had always been a big feature of the yôm (cf. Pss. 50; 82:1,8). Cf. also W. Cossmann, Die Entwicklung des Gerichtsgedankens bei den alttestamentlichen Propheten (Giessen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann, 1915), pp. 12-13; Watts, op. cit., pp. 74ff. But Franz Hesse, "Wurzelt die prophetische Gerichtsrede im israelitischen Kult?," Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, LXV (1953), 52, holds that the cultic nabi spoke judgment only on foreign nations.

Israel's enemies would be subdued and she would be exalted over them. The imagery of the holy war used in connection with the day of Yahweh shows that the people thought in terms of a day of battle and victory.<sup>34</sup> The people expected Yahweh to come in judgment against their enemies, not in judgment against Israel. But Amos uses the popular expectation and turns it against the people:

Woe to you who desire the day of Yahweh!  
Why would you have the day of Yahweh?  
It is darkness and not light (5:18).<sup>35</sup>

Amos shows how helpless the people will be before Yahweh when he comes: they will be like a man fleeing from a lion and running into a bear, or like a man unexpectedly bitten by a snake (5:19). For when Yahweh comes, judgment will fall not only on the foreign nations (1:3-2:5), but also, and especially, on Israel (2:6,13-16; 8:9-10). Yahweh himself will pass through the midst of the people (5:17); then the people who were longing for the day of Yahweh will only be able to say "Hush!" as they carry out the dead bodies (6:9-10; 8:3). "Die Art Religion, die sich in der Volkshoffnung auf den Tag Jahwes breit macht, hört in dem Augenblick auf, wo der wirkliche Gott in Erscheinung tritt; so empfindet es Amos."<sup>36</sup>

The people had a wrong idea of Yahweh's coming because they had a wrong idea of his nature. Since they thought of Yahweh as their national god, bound to his people with a tie that he could not break without

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<sup>34</sup>von Rad, "The Origin of the Concept of the Day of Yahweh," op. cit., pp. 103ff. Cf. also Morgenstern, op. cit., pp. 36-38; Cripps, op. cit., p. 193.

<sup>35</sup>Cf. H. W. Robinson, op. cit., p. 143; and Walther Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, translated from the German sixth edition by J. A. Baker (London: S. C. M. Press, Ltd., 1961), I, 464.

<sup>36</sup>Weiser, Die Profetie des Amos, p. 221.

losing his own existence, there could be no consistent basis for his execution of judgment on Israel. Of course, the Hebrews had no conception of secondary causes, so they referred all good and evil back to Yahweh (cf. 3:6b). But the popular conception of Yahweh could only account for his acts of punishment as occurring at his whim; when he would bring evil on Israel, this was "nur eine willkürliche, partielle Willensbetätigung Jahwes."<sup>37</sup> An example of this popular attitude seems to be preserved in 6:9-10. Amos gives the people's reaction to the day of Yahweh: one of the survivors says, "Hush! we must not mention the name of Yahweh." It seems that the people thought of Yahweh as the demon of destruction who was likely to leap upon them capriciously if they made a wrong move. Cripps states,

The present verse, however, is unique in the O. T. in the evidence which it furnishes of an appalling degree of popular superstition in ancient Israel, surrounding this belief. If in the course of speech a man should find himself referring by name to Him who has sent the plague, the *Diety* may do even further damage in the same or in other ways.<sup>38</sup>

Amos saw that the people's conception of Yahweh as a nationalistic, capricious God was entirely wrong. Certainly Yahweh was free and sovereign in his acts of judgment—but he did not act on his whim or even in blind retaliation to sin. Amos proclaims Yahweh as a "durchaus sittliche Macht"<sup>39</sup> who shows justice even as he requires it (5:24). His high conception of "ethical monotheism" governs his view of Yahweh's

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<sup>37</sup>Cossmann, *op. cit.*, p. 7. Cf. Cripps, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

<sup>38</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 213. Cf. Weiser, Das Buch der zwölf kleinen Propheten, p. 171.

<sup>39</sup>Cossmann, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

activity in judgment. "Der Gerichtsgedanke wird bei ihm zum 'notwendigen Korrelat' des Gottesbewusstseins."<sup>40</sup> Yahweh will never enter into judgment capriciously; yet his own righteous nature requires that he come in judgment against a sinful nation, even if that nation is his own people (6:8). Thus the tension in Amos' preaching consists in this,

dass er den Gott, der auf dem Zion thront und von dort seine Stimme erschallen lässt, nun verkündet als den, der eben über Zion-Jerusalem das Ende bringt (vgl. 1:2 mit 2:5). Das ist die furchtbare Freiheit Gottes—Israel gegenüber und gegenüber allen, die ihn an die Menschen binden möchten. Er ist nicht ein Menschgott oder ein Volksgott, er ist der Herr.<sup>41</sup>

The fact that Amos expected complete destruction of Israel is only a corollary of his conception of the God who comes in judgment. The question of a remnant in Amos' thought will be discussed below; here it is only necessary to show that Amos' view of the nature of Yahweh led him to proclaim complete destruction for Israel. In obedience to his visions ("The end has come," 8:2) Amos preached the end of Israel and her exile (2:13-16; 3:11; 4:2-3; 5:11,26; 6:7-8,11; 9:8b). He told the people, "Prepare to meet your God!" (4:12), the same God who in the fifth vision stood in the midst of the people and said, "Not one of them shall escape" (9:1). The pitiful residue that shall be left (3:12; 5:3) will be the terrible evidence of the total judgment.<sup>42</sup> So convinced is Amos of Israel's destruction that he prematurely takes up her funeral dirge:

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<sup>40</sup>Weiser, Die Profetie des Amos, pp. 310, 143. Cf. also Cossmann, op. cit., pp. 31, 155.

<sup>41</sup>Hertrich, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>42</sup>On the question whether these verses represent a remnant of Israel in Amos' thought, see infra, pp. 37-40.

Fallen, no more to rise,  
 is the virgin Israel.  
 Forsaken on her land,  
 with none to raise her up (5:2).

Prior to Amos' time, God had come in judgment on his people; but his judgment had meant only the end of a regime (1 Kings 14:4-13; 2 Kings 9:1-3) or of a part of the nation (Judg. 20:18) or destruction for a limited time (1 Kings 17:1). But now Amos proclaimed the destruction of the whole people. "Here is the most shockingly novel note in all eighth-century prophecy: that God can and will cast off his people."<sup>43</sup>

Yet Amos' proclamation of total destruction must be seen against the background of his conception of the nature of Yahweh. He looks at the judgment not from the human standpoint but from God's standpoint: "Amos das Gericht im letzten Grunde von Gottes Standpunkt aus beurteilt, nicht theoretisch, aber in seinem praktischen Verfahren."<sup>44</sup> The Durchsetzung of Yahweh's righteousness in judgment can only mean total destruction of all that opposes him. Thus Weiser can say about the total destruction:

er ist m. E. nur zu verstehen, wenn man beachtet, dass Amos mit rücksichtsloser Konsequenz, die zu dem letzten Grund der Dinge, zu Gottes Wesen selbst vordringt, also nicht geschichtlich real, sondern letztlich religiös denkt.

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<sup>43</sup>Bright, The Kingdom of God, pp. 66-67. Cf. Watts, op. cit., p. 17; Smith, op. cit., pp. 65ff. However, Arvid S. Kapelrud, "God as Destroyer in the Preaching of Amos and in the Ancient Near East," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXI (1952), 34ff., attempts to show from Babylonian evidence that "the ancient Near Eastern gods did not hesitate to destroy their own people," and therefore Amos did not invent this idea. Morgenstern, op. cit., p. 426, explains why Amos bothered to preach at all, if he knew the covenant was doomed anyway: abrogation can become valid only by first notifying the party, and this was Amos' task.

<sup>44</sup>Cossmann, op. cit., pp. 170-71.

And again: "Gerichtsgrund und Gerichtsziel fallen für ihn zusammen mit der ihm selbst irrationalen Realität und Realisierung des Gottes seines Erlebens."<sup>45</sup> In the final analysis, Amos' prophecy about Israel's total destruction is a theological assertion, the necessary consequence of Yahweh's coming into the midst of his sinful nation.

Some scholars have attempted to change this theological assertion into a historical prediction which stems from acute political observation. In this view, Amos could foresee from the rise of Assyria as the world power that Israel would finally be completely destroyed; only secondarily did he make Yahweh the agent of the judgment.<sup>46</sup> However, it is quite likely that Amos was preaching Yahweh's judgment on Israel before Assyria had risen to a prominent level. His idea of Yahweh's judgment came not from political observation, but it was based on "das Bewusstsein des allein ethischen Gottes und die Gegensätzlichkeit zu ihm in Israels Rechtsverkommenheit."<sup>47</sup> Amos is very explicit in making Yahweh himself the agent of the judgment on Israel. The "I, Yahweh" rings out in the oracles of destruction (2:13; 3:14-15; 4:12; 5:17,27; 6:8,14; 7:9; 9:9-10,11; 9:1-4,8-9). It was not merely a historical development or political misfortune that was to spell the doom for Israel;

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<sup>45</sup>Die Profetie des Amos, pp. 144, 312. Cf. also Cossmann, op. cit., p. 31.

<sup>46</sup>Cf. Cripps, op. cit., pp. 28, 64, 101.

<sup>47</sup>Cossmann, op. cit., pp. 29-30, 156. Others holding this view include Smith, op. cit., pp. 91ff.; von Rad, Theologie des alten Testaments, p. 144; and Ernst Sellin, Das Zwölfprophetenbuch, in Kommentar zum Alten Testament, edited by Ernst Sellin (Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1922), XII, 148-49. It should be noted that "Assur" does not appear in the text of Amos.

the destruction was to be at Yahweh's own hand: "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!" (4:12). As Weiser says, "Die Kluft zwischen Gott und Volk hat er aufgerissen: wartend steht Gott, bereit zum letzten Schlag, wartend--auf seinen eigenen Untergang--steht das Volk seinem Gott gegenüber."<sup>48</sup>

Amos' proclamation of judgment is unequivocal and absolute; he paints the night of destruction as black as possible. And yet in doing this he is being a true prophet, witnessing to the reality of Yahweh as he comes in judgment. Thus Hertrich can call even Amos' proclamation of judgment a witness to Christ:

Der Prophet Gottes hat wohl das ganze Gericht zu verkünden. Aber sein Wort ist doch auch darin Christus-Zeugnis, dass er die Nacht, aus der Christus errettet, wirklich als die Nacht erkennen lässt, in die kein irdisches Licht mehr hineinleuchten kann.<sup>49</sup>

The truth of this statement applies to Yahweh's dealings with his people in the Old Testament; only when there is total judgment can there be total grace.

#### The Possibility of Repentance

Even as Amos proclaims the sentence of doom, there are a few passages which suggest the possibility that Israel may even now repent and avert the judgment. The very fact that Amos was still preaching to Israel shows that repentance was still possible: "Aber dass Gott noch redet und ruft, das ist zugleich mitten im Gericht ein Unterpand dafür, dass in

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<sup>48</sup>Die Profetie des Amos, pp. 172-73, 133f. Cf. also von Rad, Theologie des alten Testaments, p. 144; Morgenstern, op. cit., p. 36; and Kapelrud, Central Ideas in Amos, p. 47.

<sup>49</sup>Op. cit., p. 61.

diesem Wort noch eine Tür geöffnet ist."<sup>50</sup> Amos preaches judgment to the people in an effort to bring them to a decision. If they return to Yahweh, he is ready, in the midst of the judgment, to forgive them.

Amos 4:6-11 is a powerful witness to Yahweh's long-suffering love and his willingness to forgive his rebellious people, even though this testimony is set in a framework of a series of acts of judgment. There is a blow upon blow effect as Amos rehearses for the people the visitations from Yahweh in the past: famine, drought, blight and mildew, a plague, war and perhaps an earthquake. But each time the reaction of the people is the same, and the refrain becomes monotonous: "Yet you did not return to me" (w<sup>e</sup>lō šabtem cādai). Weiser argues that Amos did not regard these acts of judgment as disciplinary; he did not rehearse them in order to cause the people to repent. He was merely pointing to the continual, permanent state of the people in being unable to repent and turn to God. "Er sieht in der stets sich gleich bleibenden negativen Reaktion des Volkes einen Dauerzustand, eine Unmöglichkeit, bis zum Wesen des wirklichen Gottes durchzudringen."<sup>51</sup> It is true that the rehearsal of the past judgment and of the people's stubborn refusal to repent is used by Amos as a terrible indictment. He draws the conclusion: "Therefore (lākēn) thus I will do to you, O Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel!" (4:12). But at the

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>51</sup>Weiser, Das Buch der zwölf kleinen Propheten, p. 155. Cf. also Weiser, Die Profetie des Amos, pp. 175-78; Artur Weiser, "Zu Amos 4:6-13," Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, XLVI (1928), 58-59; Cripps, op. cit., p. 172.

same time this oracle is a testimony to Yahweh's concern for his people and his patience in the face of their continued rebellion. Yahweh had sent repeated warnings: "He had hoped yearningly after each such visitation that Israel might take heed and understand and turn from its evil way and return to Him, its God."<sup>52</sup> But now his patience was at an end. He had sent plagues in the past to cause his people to return, and he had been unsuccessful. Now he himself would come in judgment, and this would mean the end for Israel (4:12; 9:1-4). And still this word of absolute judgment is spoken out of the grace of God. For, although all hope of repentance is gone, the door is not completely closed; the people are still warned to "prepare" (*hikkôn*) to meet their God. Yahweh is still their God, and he sends one final warning to his people before he comes to destroy them. The past acts of judgment were mere plagues and, since they did not cause the people to repent, they only serve to prove that the people are guilty and deserve final and complete judgment. But the possibility must remain that Amos' proclamation of this final judgment will jolt the people out of their false religion of security and result "in der radikalen Abkehr von der egozentrisch orientierten Religion und Hinwendung zu dem wirklichen Gott."<sup>53</sup> The hymnic declaration that follows (4:13) portrays Yahweh as creator and as one who declares his thoughts to man. The fact that Yahweh communicates his intentions to men, warning them of the coming judgment, indicates that repentance is

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<sup>52</sup>Morgenstern, *op. cit.*, pp. 43, 419. Similarly, Sellin, *op. cit.*, p. 151, who terms Yahweh's judgment "Pädagogie"; Kapelrud, *Central Ideas in Amos*, pp. 51-52; and H. W. Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

<sup>53</sup>Weiser, *Das Buch der zwölf kleinen Propheten*, p. 155.

still possible, however unlikely it may be.<sup>54</sup> Thus even one of the most terrible statements of doom that Amos made carries within itself the power to cut to the heart and to turn the people.

In Amos 5 the black night of judgment lifts momentarily and a ray of hope shines through. Amos exhorts the people to seek Yahweh, with the promise that they will live (5:4,6,14-15). This comes immediately after a passage on judgment (5:1-3); Israel is to seek the very God that is destroying her. Set into this context, it is easy to see that these passages promising life to those who seek Yahweh cannot lightly be understood as easy, harmless grace. Indeed, upon closer examination these oracles appear to lean more in the direction of warnings than of promises. Each of the first two oracles contains both grace and judgment. In the first oracle (5:4-5) the word "seek" has a cultic flavor; there is a contrast between seeking Yahweh in true worship or seeking him in the syncretistic cultus of the local sanctuaries:

Seek me and live;  
 but do not seek Bethel,  
 and do not enter into Gilgal  
 or cross over to Beersheba;  
 for Gilgal shall surely go into exile,  
 and Bethel shall come to nought.

Both possibilities are available to the people; the one choice will mean life, and the other choice will mean death. The second oracle likewise contains a contrast between grace and judgment, with a promise to those who seek Yahweh and a fearful warning to those who refuse (5:6-7):

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<sup>54</sup>Buber, *op. cit.*, p. 106. Most scholars feel that the hymnic sections in Amos were added later (4:13; 5:8-9; 9:5-6); e.g., Cripps, *op. cit.*, p. 185. But it seems more likely that Amos borrowed these hymns from the cultus; cf. Watts, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

Seek Yahweh and live,  
 lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph,  
 and it devour, with none to quench it for Bethel,  
 O you who turn justice to wormwood,  
 and cast down righteousness to the earth.<sup>55</sup>

The possibility of life is there, for people who will turn and live in the covenant relationship with Yahweh: "Seek Yahweh and live." But the grim possibility of death is likewise there: "lest (pen) he break out like fire in the house of Joseph." The dreadful pen keeps this passage from being an unconditional promise of grace. It is rather a call to a decision between life and death.

The third "seek" oracle (5:14-15) appears at first to be more of a pure promise than the first two had been:

Seek good, and not evil,  
 that you may live;  
 and so Yahweh, the God of hosts, will be with you,  
 as you have said.  
 Hate evil, and love good,  
 and establish justice in the gate;  
 perhaps Yahweh, the God of hosts,  
 will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

Many scholars feel that this oracle does not fit in with the rest of Amos' thought, so they conclude that it was added later to the collection of his oracles.<sup>56</sup> On the contrary, it seems to fit in very well with Amos' conception of Yahweh and his dealings with Israel. It contains a promise, to be sure; but this promise is given only on the condition of a radical repentance. The people must seek good and not evil, they must get right in their relationship with Yahweh and with one another. They had been

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<sup>55</sup>Weiser, *Die Profetie des Amos*, p. 184, considers 5:6 to be a later addition, but his evidence is not convincing.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 186; and Fosbroke, *op. cit.*, p. 770.

flippantly saying, "Yahweh is with us" (5:14), without realizing that in their present sinful state it would mean death for Yahweh to be with them (5:17; 9:1). However, Amos tells them, if they do truly repent and seek good,<sup>57</sup> then "Yahweh is with us" will truly apply, and they will live in fellowship with him.

However, Yahweh's grace is not dependent on anything the people do. If they hate evil and love good and establish justice, "perhaps (ʔûlai) Yahweh, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph" (5:15). The ʔûlai is a most important word here, and there are two sides to its meaning: it can reflect both grace and judgment. In other usage in the Old Testament ʔûlai usually expresses a hope of a favorable turn of events (cf. Gen. 16:2; Num. 22:6,11; 23:3; 1 Sam. 6:5; Jer. 20:10). A close parallel to Amos 5:15 is found in Zephaniah 2:3: "Seek Yahweh . . . ; perhaps (ʔûlai) you will be hidden on the day of the wrath of Yahweh." But in some cases this word expresses a fear or doubt (Gen. 27:12; Job 1:5). And in still other cases the word is used in mockery: "Stand fast in your sorceries . . . , perhaps (ʔûlai) you will be able to succeed" (Is. 47:12; cf. Jer. 51:8). The word in Amos 5:15 seems to have been purposely chosen because of its Doppelseitigkeit. On the one hand, it holds out a hope: perhaps Yahweh will be gracious. But, on the other hand, it refuses to make this hope absolute; for even if the people fulfill Yahweh's demands, the ʔûlai remains. And for those whose show of

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<sup>57</sup>It is questionable whether the "good" (tôb, 5:14,15) is identical with Yahweh (cf. 5:4,6). More probably it refers to the will of Yahweh which was well-known to the Israelites through written and oral instruction; cf. Rudolph, op. cit., pp. 29-30; and Weiser, Das Buch der zwölf kleinen Propheten, p. 162.

repentance is sham, it becomes an ironical ḥûlai, a statement of a possibility that does not exist. Hertrich remarks, "Durch die Pforte dieses 'Vielleicht' wird das Gottesvolk nicht im Stolz und ungebrochener Sicherheit gehen können."<sup>58</sup> It is a "perhaps" that leaves the door open for repentance and salvation; yet it is a "perhaps" that is based solely on Yahweh's grace and not on man's repentance. For this reason it pushes man back into complete dependence on God. Thus even in grace God's sovereignty is maintained. This ḥûlai demonstrates the tension in Amos' preaching between judgment and grace. Weiser points this out:

Wenn es von dem Rest Josephs redet, dessen sich Jahwe vielleicht erbarmen wird, dann lässt es den schweren Ernst göttlichen Gerichts unvermindert stehen und sieht doch selbst in der Katastrophe noch die ausgestreckte Gotteshand, die das Volk allein zum Leben zu führen vermag. Dieses polare Nebeneinander von Gnade und Gericht als zweier Wesenszüge göttlicher Wirklichkeit gibt dem Spruch seine eigenartige Prägung und weitgreifende Bedeutung.<sup>59</sup>

#### The Survival of a Remnant

There are a few passages in Amos which at first appear to soften the sentence of total destruction for Israel. These are the passages which speak of the survival of a remnant even though the main part of the nation is destroyed (especially 3:12; 5:3,15; and 9:8-10). If the idea of a remnant which survives the judgment and becomes the basis for

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<sup>58</sup>Op. cit., p. 58; cf. Rudolph, op. cit., pp. 30-31.

<sup>59</sup>Das Buch der zwölf kleinen Propheten, p. 163. Hugo Gressmann, Die älteste Geschichtsschreibung und Prophetie Israels, 2. Abteilung in Die Schriften des A. T. in Auswahl neu übersetzt und für die Gegenwart erklärt (Zweite Auflage; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1921), I, 346, misunderstands Amos' idea of Yahweh's nature and assumes Amos is giving vent to his own emotions in 5:15.

a new Israel is really in Amos' thought, then he has resolved the tension between judgment and grace. This is the view of Hesse:

Die Masse der Schuldigen wird vernichtet, aber ein Rest wird gerettet. Dieser Rest aber wird der Kern eines neuen, eines sündlosen Israels, des wahren Gottesvolkes sein. So behalten beide Sätze ihre Gültigkeit: Die Sünder müssen vernichtet werden um der Heiligkeit Jahwes Willen, und: dem Volke Jahwes muss Heil widerfahren um der gegebenen Verheissung willen.<sup>60</sup>

In order to determine whether this idea is really contained in Amos' thought, the individual passages must be investigated.

Amos 3:12 is set in the context of a series of judgment oracles against Israel (3:9-11, 13-15; 4:1-3). The passage itself is difficult because of the word ûbidmešeq in 3:12c, an otherwise unknown word. Many are the explanations or emendations that have been proposed,<sup>61</sup> but none have been entirely convincing. It is perhaps best to follow all the old versions and understand d<sup>e</sup>mešeq as "Damascus" (dammešeq). This raises a question of interpretation, since "Damascus" hardly fits in with the idea of 3:12. Weiser proposes to understand 3:12ab as a complete oracle, with 3:2c as the beginning of the following oracle.<sup>62</sup> If this suggestion

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<sup>60</sup>Franz Hesse, "Amos 5:4-6:14f.," Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, LXVIII (1956), 16; Hesse thinks the idea of the remnant is the key to the understanding of Amos' whole preaching.

<sup>61</sup>E.g., G. R. Driver, "Difficult Words in the Hebrew Prophets," Studies in Old Testament Prophecy: Presented to Professor Theodore H. Robinson by the Society for Old Testament Study on His Sixty-fifth Birthday, August 9th 1946, edited by H. H. Rowley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1950), p. 67, emends the word to mīqraš, "frame," coined from the Aramaic muršā, "plank"; Joseph Reider, "פמרא in Am. 3:12," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXVII (1948), 247-48, sees dmšq as a composition of dm and šq, both meaning "pillar" or "leg."

<sup>62</sup>Die Profetie des Amos, pp. 145, 153; also Weiser, Das Buch der zwölf kleinen Propheten, pp. 147-48. He then translates 3:12c: "Ihr, die ihr sitzt in Samaria auf dem Rand des Diwans und in Damaskus auf dem Bett der Lagerstätte . . . ."

is followed, then the oracle under consideration may be translated:

"Thus says Yahweh: 'As the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs or a piece of an ear, thus shall the Israelites be rescued.'"

Without a doubt the oracle speaks of a remnant; but what kind of a remnant is it? Many scholars think that Amos intends here to leave room for a small remnant of faithful Israelites to escape the coming destruction. Smith states, "Amos might well have hoped for the survival of a remnant of its people, however small, which indeed he grimly hints at in 3:12."<sup>63</sup>

However, it is extremely doubtful whether the idea of a "remnant" in the sense of a portion of the people remaining over after the judgment is at all implied in this passage. It seems probable that Amos is here taking over a favorite saying of the people: "The people of Israel will be rescued" (yinnās<sup>e</sup>elû benê yisrā'ēl). Certainly the Israelites will be rescued, Amos says, just like a shepherd rescues (yassîl) two legs or a piece of an ear from the mouth of a lion. The meaning would be clear to the people; Genesis 31:39 and Exodus 22:12 refer to the practice of saving part of the remains of an animal torn by wild beasts in order to prove what had happened. The "rescuing" of part of the animal is proof of its death. This is what the rescue of Israel will be:

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<sup>63</sup>Op. cit., p. 172. Others holding this view include von Rad, Theologie des alten Testaments, p. 145; Snaith, op. cit., p. 117; McCullough, op. cit., p. 254; and Friedrich Nötscher, Die Gerechtigkeit Gottes bei den vorexilischen Propheten (Münster: Aschendorfsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1915), p. 69. Luther remarks that, although the remains are not much, they are still a remnant; "Deus autem sic irascitur et percutit, quantumvis saeviat, ut tamen salvae maneant reliquiae"; Martin Luther, Praelectiones in Prophetas minores. 1524-26, series 1 in D. Martin Luthers Werke: kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus, 1889), XIII, 174.

the pitiful remnant left over will be proof of the nation's death.<sup>64</sup>  
 Thus this oracle serves as a devastating prophecy of doom for those people who were sure that, even though the judgment would come, they as the elected people would be rescued.

Another passage in question is Amos 5:3. This oracle reads:

For thus says Adonai Yahweh:  
 "The city that goes forth a thousand  
 shall be left (taš'îr) a hundred,  
 and the one that goes forth a hundred  
 shall be left (taš'îr) ten,  
 for the house of Israel."

This oracle is a prophecy of an overwhelming defeat in battle; but at the same time does it leave room for a remnant of Israel to survive the judgment? The preceding oracle (5:1-2) is Amos' prophetic lamentation over the total destruction of Israel ("The virgin Israel has fallen, no more to rise"); the following oracle is the "seek me" passage implying the grim possibility of repentance and life (5:4ff.). Yet even the latter passage does not imply a remnant, for it is addressed to the people as a whole. It would seem from the context, then, that the whole accent of 5:3 is on the efficiency of the destruction. The loss of ninety per cent of the men in a battle would surely be classified as a total defeat.

"Die Dezimierung des Heeres kommt seiner Vernichtung gleich."<sup>65</sup> Not that

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<sup>64</sup>Weiser, Die Profetie des Amos, pp. 145-46; Cripps, op. cit., p. 162; Harper, op. cit., p. 81; Gressmann, Die älteste Geschichtsschreibung und Prophetie Israels, p. 341; and Eichrodt, op. cit., p. 466.

<sup>65</sup>Hertrich, op. cit., p. 51. Cf. also Weiser, Die Profetie des Amos, p. 182; Cripps, op. cit., p. 179; Gressmann, op. cit., p. 32; and Gressmann, Die älteste Geschichtsschreibung und Prophetie Israels, p. 345. On the other hand, McCullough, op. cit., p. 254, feels that the passage is meant to imply limited activity in the community even after the judgment; the description of total destruction is "prophetic extravagance."

a tenth remains, but that the destruction is overwhelming, is the import of this oracle. That there is still a possibility of life (5:4ff.) does not contradict this conclusion; for the life is in Yahweh, even though the people have no more life left in themselves.

Another passage that must come into play in a discussion of Amos' idea of a remnant is 9:8-10. This passage is extremely difficult to interpret, and scholars are by no means agreed on some of the problems involved. Verse 8 appears to contain a contradiction within itself: "Behold, the eyes of Adonai Yahweh are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the surface of the ground; except that (epes kî) I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob." There is no escaping the fact that 9:8c does indeed imply that a remnant survives the destruction; but did Amos make this statement? Obviously it stands in sharp contrast with 9:8ab, but this in itself is not sufficient evidence to deny it to Amos, since the same phenomenon occurs elsewhere in his book (cf. the two sets of visions). But 9:9-10 is closely connected with 9:8 (kî), and perhaps these verses shed some light on the question.

In 9:9 there is a picture of a sieve (k<sup>e</sup>bārâ) used to illustrate the judgment on Israel:

For behold, I am about to command,  
and I will shake the house of Israel among all the nations,  
as it is shaken (yinnôa') with a sieve,  
and not a pebble (š<sup>e</sup>rôr) shall fall to the earth.

There is some question with regard to the type of sieve that is meant here. It could be a sieve whose purpose was to shake out the chaff and leave the best corn; this would imply that the "pebbles" which do not fall through are the good remnant of the people which will survive the destruction. However, it seems more likely that a large meshed sieve is

implied here, one through which the corn (or sand, if it is a sand sieve) falls, while the pebbles and rubbish are retained in the sieve. The Septuagint rendering of 2 Samuel 4:6 seems to point to this practice: kai idou hē thurōros tou oikou ekathairen purous ("And behold, the door-keeper of the house was cleaning wheat"). This larger sieve is also mentioned in Sirach 27:5: "When a sieve (koskinon) is shaken, the refuse remains." The word koskinon is employed in Amos 9:9 by the versions of Aquila and Symmachus.<sup>66</sup> Thus in 9:9 Amos is saying that Israel will be put through a judgment in which all the rubbish will be destroyed. This verse leaves open the possibility that perhaps some good Israelites, a holy remnant, will fall through the "sieve" of destruction and so be saved. However, 9:10 says something about this possibility: "By the sword all the sinners of my people (hattā'ê 'ammî) shall die." It is very unlikely that Amos intended to make a distinction between sinners and righteous people in Israel, implying that the sinners would be destroyed but the righteous would be saved. In 9:8a the whole nation is characterized as sinful (hammanlākā haḥattā'â); and 9:1ff. makes it very clear that not even one person will escape the destruction. Thus the phrase kōl hattā'ê 'ammî in 9:10 should not be understood in the sense of a partitive genitive relationship; rather the relationship appears to be an exegetical genitive, perhaps nearer defined as a genitive of the genus. Therefore the phrase should not be understood as referring to individual sinners

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<sup>66</sup>This material is discussed by Cripps, *op. cit.*, pp. 266-68. Paul Volz, "Zu Amos 9:9," Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, XXXVIII (1919-20), 110, mentions the possibility that the sieve is used by Amos to illustrate the mode of judgment: exile with no return. Thus the sieve would correspond to the Völkerwelt.

among the people but to "the totality of my sinful people."<sup>67</sup> Therefore Cripps is justified in saying, "It is impossible to prove that Amos ever believed that in fact there would be any righteous, or repentant, for God to save."<sup>68</sup>

From the above discussion of Amos 9:8-10 it may be concluded that 9:8c, which speaks of the survival of a remnant, was not written by Amos. It could possibly have been added later as a marginal note by a scribe who thought 9:9-10 implied that there would be a remnant. However, this passage, like 3:12 and 5:3, is intended to show the totality of the judgment on Israel. The people of Israel are like the pebbles which remain in a sieve after the corn has fallen through. Yahweh's eyes are upon this sinful nation (cf. 9:4), and he will destroy it from the face of the earth.

There are other passages in Amos which show that he used the idea

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<sup>67</sup>On the genitive of the genus cf. Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar, edited by E. Kautzsch, translated by A. E. Cowley (Second English edition; Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1910), p. 416, par. 128. For the meaning of kōl with a definite genitive as "the totality" cf. p. 411, par. 127b.

<sup>68</sup>Op. cit., pp. 68-69. Agreeing with this conclusion are Weiser, Das Buch der zwölf kleinen Propheten, p. 201, who thinks the punishment implied is an earthquake; Volz, op. cit., p. 110; Kapelrud, Central Ideas in Amos, pp. 53-54; Hertrich, op. cit., p. 82, who says, "Das ganze Gewicht liegt auch hier auf der Totalität des Gerichtes." Other scholars hold that 9:9-10 do make a distinction between sinful and righteous Israelites and for that reason cannot stem from Amos; cf. Harper, op. cit., p. 195; and Gressmann, Die älteste Geschichtsschreibung und Prophetie Israels, p. 358. Finally, other scholars hold that these verses do come from Amos and do show a type of sifting judgment, implying that there was a righteous remnant which would be saved; cf. Nötscher, op. cit., pp. 69-70; Buber, op. cit., p. 108; and Karl Budde, "Zu Text und Auslegung des Buches Amos," Journal of Biblical Literature, XLIV (1925), 112-13, who also feels that the oracle in 9:1-4 supports the validity of making a distinction between the sinners and the righteous people, since the judgment is placed on an individual basis.

of a "remnant" only as a witness to the total destruction. In 2:16, some will escape the destruction, to be sure: the stoutest of the mighty shall flee away to safety. But he will flee away naked, as proof that all those less mighty will find no escape at all. In 6:9-10, there are ten people in a house when the judgment comes. The fact that one of them is left (verse 10 seems to indicate this) hardly means that there will be a remnant; that person is left to bury the bones of the rest. A similar idea is found in 8:3, where some people are left to cast out the corpses of the rest. In 9:1, there is a remnant left over after the destruction (ḏah<sup>a</sup>ritām); but even this small remnant cannot escape the wrath of Yahweh, for he will pursue them until every one of them is exterminated. A passage of a somewhat different sort is 8:11-12; here the judgment consists of a famine of hearing the words of Yahweh. There will be a remnant left, running to and fro as they seek the word of Yahweh, but they will not find it. The passage presupposes the conviction that man does not live by bread alone but by the issue of the mouth of Yahweh (Deut. 8:3); when this source of life is broken, there is death. Thus the "remnant" vainly seeking the word of Yahweh becomes a terrible witness to the inner judgment that goes along with the outer destruction. Weiser remarks,

Das innere Sichverzehren, das Suchen ohne Ziel und Gewissheit, das ungestillte Verlangen nach der Sinnerfüllung des Daseins, das Fragen nach Gott, das ohne Antwort bleibt, das Beten zu ihm, das nicht mehr zu Zwiesprache wird, alles das ist inneres Gericht, schlimmer und hoffungsloser als alles äussere Unglück.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>Das Buch der zwölf kleinen Propheten, pp. 197-98. Cf. also Hertrich, op. cit., p. 76.

The sum total of the evidence assembled above is this: Amos had no conception of the possible survival of a remnant of the people after the final destruction, a remnant which would then go on to become the new people of God. He spoke of a remnant only as proof of the death of the nation. Here is God's judgment in its sternest reality. And yet there remains a "perhaps"; in one more passage Amos speaks of a remnant: "Seek good, and not evil, that you may live . . . perhaps Yahweh, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant (še, ērīt) of Joseph" (5:14-15). There will be no remnant left over in the destruction, living out of its own power; Israel will die. But with Yahweh there is life; he is able to create life out of death (cf. Ez. 37). So Hertrich can say,

Durch die Pforte dieses "Vielleicht" wird das Gottesvolk nicht im Stolz und ungebrochener Sicherheit gehen können. Nur als "Rest," als der aus dem Maul des Löwen "gerettete" Rest (3:12), nur als das "aus dem Brande gerissene Holzscheit" (4:11), und das heisst: als der Rest, der überhaupt nicht mehr lebt von sich aus, nur als das Volk, das nach nichts anderem mehr ausschaut als nach der Gnade und Barmherzigkeit Gottes, wird Israel "vielleicht" noch eine Zukunft haben.<sup>70</sup>

This "perhaps" stands on the other side of judgment and death. There is nothing to soften the stark sentence of doom, not even the idea of a remnant. But the "perhaps" of God's grace was also revealed to Amos (cf. the first two visions); does it find utterance in any of the oracles recorded in his book?

#### The Eschatology of Salvation

One of the most hotly debated passages in Amos is 9:11-15, which

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<sup>70</sup>Op. cit., pp. 58-59.

describes an unconditional eschatology of salvation for Israel. Some excerpts from the passage read as follows:

In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen, and I will repair its breaches, and I will raise up its ruins, and I will rebuild it as in the days of old . . . . I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the cities that are ruined and inhabit them . . . . I will plant them upon their land, and they shall never again be plucked up out of the land which I have given them, says Yahweh your God.

The one big question is this: does this passage stem from Amos, or was it added later to soften the harshness of the judgment he prophesied?

The answer to this question will determine whether this passage should be included in the attempt to determine Amos' conception of the relationship between judgment and grace in Yahweh's dealings with his people.

A great many scholars have rejected the authenticity of Amos 9:11-15 for a variety of reasons. These reasons may be summed up as follows.

1. This passage, so full of hope and consolation, is incongruous with the rest of Amos' book. Amos 9:11-15 comes as a sudden change of pace, unlike anything else in the book. Where elsewhere the theme had been almost exclusively the doom of Israel, now a very rosy future is painted. It comes so suddenly that there appears to be no connection with the preceding oracles. Lods calls this passage "an appendix so full of consolation, that if it were authentic it would reduce the daring denunciations of Amos to the proportions of a village squabble."<sup>71</sup>

2. This prospect of a future restoration of Israel is completely without an ethical nature. It is nationalistic, materialistic, and related to the fertility cult; but there is no insistence on ethical quality.

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<sup>71</sup>Lods, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86. Cf. also Harper, *op. cit.*, p. 195; Kapelrud, *Central Ideas in Amos*, p. 58; Cripps, *op. cit.*, pp. 67, 69.

This argument is "almost insuperable," according to Cripps, who says,

What is missing from the Epilogue is just the very thing which we should look for in it if it owed its origin to the great moralist Amos; viz. some statement, however brief, that the future of happiness described in the disputed verses was essentially bound up with God's ethical government of the world.<sup>72</sup>

3. The historical background implied in the passage is not of Amos' time. The expression "the booth of David" (sukkat dāwîd) presupposes the exile, when the house of David had fallen. There is no indication that both Israel and Judah were not prosperous at Amos' time, so the ruined cities likewise suggest the exile. Cripps suggests three possible eras for this passage: at the time of the Babylonian captivity, at the time of Haggai and Zechariah, or just before the Seleucid age.<sup>73</sup>

4. The references to David and Judah are unexpected. Amos, prophesying in northern Israel, would not suddenly have promised a great future for Judah.<sup>74</sup>

5. Some of the words and usages of this passage suggest a later age. Cripps mentions "ruin," "days of old," "sweet wine," "melt," šûb šebût, "your God" (used in a consoling sense).<sup>75</sup>

6. The later practice of adding happy endings to other prophetic books makes this ending also suspect. Cripps thinks this has been done

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<sup>72</sup>Op. cit., pp. 71, 73; cf. also Smith, op. cit., p. 204; Nathaniel Micklem, Prophecy and Eschatology (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1926), p. 109; Weiser, Die Profetie des Amos, p. 288; and Hyatt, op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>73</sup>Op. cit., pp. 74, 77, 272. Cf. Harper, op. cit., p. 198.

<sup>74</sup>Micklem, op. cit., p. 109-10; cf. Cripps, op. cit., p. 71-72.

<sup>75</sup>Op. cit., p. 73.

in Micah 7:7-20; Zephaniah 3:14-20; Hosea 14; Isaiah 40-56; and the last verses of Chronicles.<sup>76</sup>

These are the arguments used by many scholars to deny 9:11-15, with its promise of a restoration of Israel, to Amos.<sup>77</sup> Then what was Amos' view of the future? He did not ask the question, but simply left it up to God, as Weiser states:

für die Frage, was am Ende neben Jahwe noch sein wird, hat Amos keinen Raum in seinem Innern; dass er sie weder gestellt noch beantwortet hat, beweist, wie stark und allbeherrschend der erschütternde Eindruck des Gotteserlebnisses ihn in seinen Bann geschlagen hat.<sup>78</sup>

Certainly Amos left the future up to Yahweh. But did he say nothing about this future, even though he saw so deeply into the nature of his God? As each of the arguments listed above against the authenticity of this passage is examined, it will be seen that none of them is decisive.

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid., pp. 75-76. Cf. also Smith, op. cit., p. 204.

<sup>77</sup>Other scholars besides those listed in footnotes 68-73 who deny this passage to Amos include McCullough, op. cit., p. 248; Cossmann, op. cit., p. 172; Gressmann, Die älteste Geschichtsschreibung und Prophetie Israels, pp. 358-59; Emil Balla, Die Botschaft der Propheten, edited by Georg Fohrer (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1958), p. 92; Curt Kuhl, The Prophets of Israel, translated by Rudolf J. Ehrlich and J. P. Smith (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1960), p. 64; Joh. Lindblom, "Gibt es eine Eschatologie bei den alttestamentlichen Propheten?," Studia Theologica, VI (1952), 109; Theodore H. Robinson and Friedrich Horst, Die Zwölf Kleinen Propheten, in Handbuch zum Alten Testament, edited by Otto Eissfeldt (Zweite Auflage; Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1954), XIV, 107-08; Fosbroke, op. cit., p. 770; and John Paterson, The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), p. 36.

<sup>78</sup>Die Profetie des Amos, p. 312. Cf. also Karl Marti, Das Dodeka-propheton, in Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament, edited by Karl Marti (Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1904), XIII, 149-50; and Cripps, op. cit., p. 32, who states, "Probably he had no programme for the more distant future, only a magnificent trust in the permanence of Jehovah and righteousness."

1. That Amos 9:11-15 is different from the rest of his book is easily seen. But in other cases Amos made seemingly contradictory statements (cf. 3:2 with 9:7). It is possible that Amos' stress on doom in the oracles recorded in his book represent only a part of his total ministry; Gordis thinks that after his exile by Amaziah (7:12-13) he worked in Judah, and 9:11-15 belongs to this period.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, it has been shown that prophecies of weal and woe set together in a unit were a common part of early ancient Near Eastern eschatology, especially from Egypt. An example is the prophecy of Neferrohu, from about 2000 B. C.

All good things are passed away . . . . I show thee the land upside down; happened that which never had happened . . . . Re removes himself from men . . . . There is a king shall come from the south . . . . The people of his time shall rejoice . . . . And Right shall come into its place, and Iniquity be cast forth.<sup>80</sup>

Thus the argument that 9:11-15 is incongruous with the rest of the book is indecisive.

2. It is true that 9:11-15 has no ethical foundation. But the "perhaps" of 5:15 shows that Amos thought of God's grace as unconditioned by men, so there do not need to be any ethical qualifications. The new state of things will be brought about entirely from Yahweh's side: "I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel (šabtî et š'ebût ammî yisrā'ēl) . . . . I will plant them upon their land." Indeed, the fact that

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<sup>79</sup>Op. cit., pp. 247ff. Similarly, Lods, op. cit., p. 83, allows for the possibility that Amos, after his mission had been interrupted, decided to record only his oracles of doom. Johs. Pedersen, Israel: Its Life and Culture (Copenhagen: Branner Og Korch, 1940), III-IV, 548, thinks that hopeful passages are not found in the rest of the book because Amos was entirely concerned with contemporary conditions.

<sup>80</sup>See Cripps, op. cit., pp. 45-48; cf. also Gressmann, Der Messias, p. 82.

Yahweh shows grace demonstrates a higher "ethical" quality: "Jahwe wird das, was er einmal 'gebaut' hat, nicht liquidieren; vor allem wird er seinen Rechtsanspruch auf die Völker, über denen sein Name ausgerufen war, nicht aufgeben."<sup>81</sup>

3. The historical allusions in this passage are not at all decisive. The active participle nōpelet can refer either to the past, present or future.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, in other places Amos speaks of future punishment as having already happened (cf. 5:2, perfect tense). The expression "booth of David" is not simply to be identified with the house (dynasty) of David; sukkâ is used in this way nowhere else. Thus the expression "the booth of David which is falling" could refer to the United Kingdom which had fallen at the time of the division.<sup>83</sup> Even if it refers to the Davidic dynasty, it could be "das ohnmächtig gewordene Davidhaus."<sup>84</sup> Or, more probably, the expression could refer to the future destruction that Amos was proclaiming upon the people of Israel (cf. 5:2); the "booth of David" would then refer to Israel as a whole.

4. If the "booth of David" refers to the United Kingdom as it was under David, or to the people of Israel as a whole, this argument is

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<sup>81</sup>von Rad, Theologie des alten Testaments, p. 149. Cf. also Rudolph, op. cit., p. 31; and H. W. Hertzberg, "Die prophetische Botschaft vom Heil und die alttestamentliche Theologie," Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift, XLIII (1932), 523, who states in this regard: "Denn das Heil kommt aus Jahves Initiative."

<sup>82</sup>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar, p. 356, par. 116d, gives examples.

<sup>83</sup>Thus Budde, op. cit., pp. 115-16; and E. Osty, Amos, Osee (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1960), pp. 16-17.

<sup>84</sup>Sellin, op. cit., p. 224. Smith, op. cit., pp. 203-04, admits there is nothing in the historical allusions to preclude Amos' authorship.

invalid, for then the prophecy does not refer to Judah alone.<sup>85</sup>

5. Smith, who rejects the passage, admits there is nothing in the language that has to be denied to Amos.<sup>86</sup>

6. The argument that happy endings may have been added to other prophetic writings carries no weight unless supported by other evidence.

It may be concluded that none of the arguments against the authenticity of Amos 9:11-15 are decisive. Most of these arguments are based on linguistic, historical, or literary critical data. If the passage is not decisively invalidated on these grounds, then the important question may be asked: does the passage fit into Amos' theology? Mays asks the question and answers it:

Now, where material is rejected as spurious on the grounds that it is incompatible with a prophet's theology, we may ask by what method the theology was ascertained. If an oracle is unobjectionable on historical grounds, then a prophet's theology must allow for it. Where the God of Amos is understood as the One who prosecutes the purpose of the election history even with the recalcitrant Israel, then the variety in Amos' preaching has a unity in the unchanging personal purpose of Yahweh pursued in the ambiguities of history . . . .<sup>87</sup>

Considered from the standpoint of Amos' conception of the nature of Yahweh, the unconditional promise of salvation in 9:11-15 does indeed appear to be authentic. Already in his call visions Amos experienced Yahweh as both a gracious God and a judging God. He gives full play

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<sup>85</sup>Sellin, op. cit., p. 157, thinks the passage refers only to Judah, but he takes 9:11-15 as the continuation of 7:17, thus making it at one time a prediction of disaster for Jeroboam and of restoration for Judah. But this seems needlessly complex.

<sup>86</sup>Op. cit., p. 200.

<sup>87</sup>James L. Mays, "Words about the Words of Amos," Interpretation, XIII (1959), 271.

to the activity of Yahweh in judgment, permitting not even a remnant to survive. But he also realizes that this is not Yahweh's last word. For Yahweh speaks one word at a time.<sup>88</sup> Although Amos had to emphasize the word of judgment, the word of grace also had to come. The two fit together as the two sides of God's dealing with man. Hertrich says:

So unvermittelt kann Gerichtswort und Heilswort nebeneinander-gestellt werden. Es bedarf keiner psychologischen Vermittlung: denn es geht ja nicht um die Frage, ob sich das Urteil des Propheten in dem Übergang von v. 10 zu v. 11 "geändert" habe . . . . Gerichtswort und Heilswort haben ihre Einheit allein in Gott selbst. Um seiner Gerechtigkeit willen kommt das Gericht. Aber dieses Gericht richtet das Recht und das Reich Gottes auf.<sup>89</sup>

There is no bridge from Amos' time to the time of salvation, no remnant left over in the judgment. The "booth of David" must fall before it can be raised; there must be doom, in order that salvation may be understood "als das Zeugnis von dem ganz unbegründbaren, ganz unbegreiflichen Wunder Gottes."<sup>90</sup> All this is based on the divine "I" and therefore means no lessening of the judgment; its only boundary is God himself.

Thus Amos cannot be understood without this last word. God did not choose a people in order to destroy them. Buber states,

It cannot be otherwise--so may the man from the desert border think--with a God, Who walks forty years with His people in the desolate wilderness: He will still walk with them in the midst of the desolation which is the work of His own judgment.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>Paterson, op. cit., p. 36.

<sup>89</sup>Op. cit., p. 80.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>91</sup>Op. cit., p. 109; he thinks 9:11-15 may have been addressed privately to a disciple. Other scholars who feel 9:11-15 represents Amos' own ideas include Watts, op. cit., p. 9; and Vriezen, op. cit., p. 359. Cf. also supra, footnotes 79-90.

Weiser, who could not convince himself that 9:11-15 stems from Amos, shows how well this passage fits into his theology if understood in the light of the rest of the book:

Der Sinn und das Ziel des Gesamtgeschehens ist nicht das Gericht, sondern das Heil. Aber durch die Bestätigung der Verheissungen im Heil ist das Gericht nicht aufgehoben, oder der Ernst Gottes gegen die Sünde abgeschwächt. Die Heilszusagen Gottes gelten unter der Voraussetzung der Anerkennung seines Gerichts über die Sünde.<sup>92</sup>

#### The Relationship Between Judgment and Grace

Amos' view of the relationship between judgment and grace in Yahweh's dealings with his people, investigated under the various topics above, may be summarized as follows: Yahweh is coming to deal with his people. And when he comes, as past history shows, he comes in both judgment and grace. Because the people feel safe in their smug security as the elected people, the coming of Yahweh will spell judgment and total destruction for them, for they have not lived up to the responsibilities of their election. No part of the people will escape; even repentance carries no guarantee that grace will be shown. Yet this judgment can be seen from the perspective of the grace of Yahweh, who in his divine sovereignty rebuilds what he has torn down and restores the fortunes of his people. "Unter dem Nein klingt verborgen das Ja." The inconceivable wonder is that there is life in the midst of death—life in Yahweh.

Ja, es gibt Rettung mitten im Sterben, es kann vom Leben geredet werden mitten im unausweichlichen Gericht. Das ist das ganz verborgene Christus-Zeugnis dieses Wortes--auf dieser Erde gewiss nichts denn lauter Paradoxie, aber eben darin prophetisches Zeugnis--über das Verstehen des Amos und seiner Hörer hinweg--von der

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<sup>92</sup>Das Buch der zwölf kleinen Propheten, p. 205.

Paradoxie des Kreuzes. Dort macht Gott offenbar, dass der Weg ins Sterben der Weg in das Leben ist, dass die Vollendung der Gerichte Gottes die geöffnete Tür ist zur Rettung.<sup>93</sup>

There is danger that Amos may be made to say too much; he did not know the Christian gospel. Yet he did know the nature of Yahweh, and on the basis of this he preached to the people of his day. His mission was to use Yahweh's word of judgment and his word of grace in order to turn the people back to Yahweh. Because of the situation of the people he emphasized almost exclusively the word of judgment. But he did this in order to call the people to repentance, to force them to a decision between life and death. For this purpose the word of judgment had to be proclaimed in all its severity; only when the people had been smitten by this word of death could Yahweh's word of grace be spoken.

Diese Verkündigung ist Predigt des Gesetzes und des Todes. Aber sie macht doch in sich selber offenbar, dass sie als diese Todespredigt nicht Gottes eigentliches Wort, sondern das zwischeneingekommene Wort ist, das ganz umschlossen bleibt von dem Wort der Gnade Gottes. Ist es nicht mitten in allem Gericht lauter Gnade, dass Gott noch durch den Propheten redet? Ist es nicht lauter Gnade, dass mitten im Todeswort der Ruf zum Leben erklingt?<sup>94</sup>

So long as there was still a prophet preaching doom there was still the possibility of repentance and life. But the time would come when there would be no such prophet, when God's judgment would be total and repentance would no longer be possible (8:11-12). This is what gives Amos' preaching of judgment and grace its fearful tension and urgency.

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<sup>93</sup>Herntrich, op. cit., pp. 40, 53, 12. Similarly, Sanders, op. cit., p. 69; Nötscher, op. cit., p. 110; and Hesse, op. cit., p. 16, who says, "Totales Gericht und totale Rettung--beides lag in der Konsequenz dieses so gearteten Gottesglaubens."

<sup>94</sup>Herntrich, op. cit., pp. 16, 76, 82. Cf. also Buber, op. cit., pp. 104-05; and Paterson, op. cit., p. 9.

### The Nature of Yahweh: His Wrathful Love

The tension that exists in Amos' preaching of judgment and grace points to a tension in Yahweh between his will to deal with his people in grace and the necessity to deal with them in judgment. Amos says little explicitly about the nature of Yahweh; but in his preaching of judgment and grace he reveals a good deal about Yahweh's essential characteristics.

Amos was the called prophet of Yahweh, compelled to speak Yahweh's words to Israel (3:8; 7:14-15); Yahweh had laid complete claim to him, and he could only prophesy in utter obedience. Rowley describes this: "He is the mouthpiece and messenger of God, sent on God's errand, and the extension of the divine personality."<sup>95</sup> Yahweh not only spoke words through his prophets, but he also revealed himself through their total beings, their lives and personalities (cf. Hos. 1:2; 3:1; Jer. 19:1ff.; 16:1ff.; Ez. 24:16ff.; etc.). Since this is the case, it may be assumed that in Amos' own reaction to the judgment and grace that he had to proclaim there is some witness to the God who is speaking through him.

Very little of Amos' reaction to his own message shows through. But his record of his first two visions does afford a glimpse into his heart.

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<sup>95</sup>H. H. Rowley, "Was Amos a Nabi?," Festschrift Otto Eissfeldt zum 60. Geburtstage 1. September 1947, edited by Johann Fück (Halle an der Saale: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1947), p. 198. Also witnessing to Amos' complete subjection to Yahweh are Hertzberg, Prophet und Gott, pp. 14-16; Watts, op. cit., p. 12; and Weiser, Die Profetie des Amos, p. 303, who gives this short formula for Amos' religious consciousness: "die Geisteshaltung des bedingungslos unter den absoluten Anspruch göttlicher Wirklichkeit gestellten Menschen." Cf. also Weiser, Das Buch der zwölf kleinen Propheten, p. 129.

As he sees the approaching doom, he cries, "O Adonai Yahweh, forgive, I pray! How can Jacob stand? He is so small!" (7:2; cf. 7:5). Even though Amos was not a native of northern Israel (1:1), still he has a great love for this people to whom he is to proclaim doom, and this inner suffering is given vent in intercession. "Amos agonized over the message of doom that he was sent to preach, and over the unbelief of the nation."<sup>96</sup> He desired the people's salvation, and yet, as Yahweh's representative, he had to proclaim divine wrath. But he knew that a people so sinful could hope for no grace without judgment, so ultimately his proclamation of doom bore testimony to his love for the people.

The struggle in Amos' heart between love and wrath points to such a struggle in Yahweh himself. The first two visions show Yahweh dealing with his people in grace (7:3,6). Indeed, the fact that he elected Israel and showed tender care for them by leading them in the wilderness and into the promised land, making provision for prophets and Nazarites, is evidence that his whole purpose for Israel was love (cf. 2:9-11).<sup>97</sup> Even in the face of Israel's consistent rebellion he continued to show long-suffering and patient care for them, sending disciplinary judgments

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<sup>96</sup>Lewis Bayles Paton, "The Problem of Suffering in the Pre-exilic Prophets," Journal of Biblical Literature, XLVI (1927), 114. Other scholars who speak of Amos' inner struggle include Smith, op. cit., p. 110; Fosbroke, op. cit., p. 770; Hertzberg, Prophet und Gott, p. 22; and Ivar P. Seierstad, "Erlebnis und Gehorsam beim Propheten Amos," Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, LII (1934), 38-39. But Smith, op. cit., p. 85, thinks he felt little love for Israel: "His message for her is achieved with scarcely one sob in his voice." Weiser, Die Profetie des Amos, pp. 135f., feels that Amos submitted himself so completely to Yahweh's will to enter into judgment with the people that he felt no tension in his office.

<sup>97</sup>Kapelrud, Central Ideas in Amos, pp. 50-53, feels Yahweh's long-suffering love and willingness to forgive are central in Amos' thought.

to impel them to return to him (4:6,11; 3:1). There is no doubt that he wants to be gracious to his people (5:15).

Yet the utterly surprising thing happened: the people rejected Yahweh's love and tender concern. They perverted the provisions he had made for their well-being (2:12), and, in spite of his patience and discipline, they refused to return (4:6-11). Yahweh had intrusted his holy name to Israel in choosing them, but they profaned this name (2:7). Therefore Yahweh's holiness and righteousness demanded that he turn against them in judgment (4:2). He swore never to forget any of their deeds (8:7), and his love turned to hatred (6:8):

Adonai Yahweh has sworn by himself . . . ,  
I abhor (m<sup>e</sup>tā'ēb for m<sup>e</sup>tā'ēb) the pride of Jacob,  
and I hate (sānē'tî) his strongholds;  
and I will deliver up the city and all that is in it.

But Yahweh's love was not suppressed by his wrath without causing suffering within himself, and hints of this suffering come to light in Amos. There is a plaintive note to the five-fold refrain describing the people's rejection of his love: "Yet you did not return to me" (4:6,8,9, 10,11). The grief of Yahweh himself is implied in his surprise that the leaders of the people "are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!" (6:6). And the little word ammî ("my people"), which Yahweh uses to describe Israel even as he is destroying her, bears eloquent testimony to the pain in Yahweh's heart.

Yahweh's love is not overcome by his wrath. The epilogue (9:11-15) shows that ultimately his wrath had been in the service of his love. He had torn down the booth of David in order that he might raise it up (9:11). He had said, "The end has come upon my people Israel" (8:2) in

order that he might say, "I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel" (9:14). Amos, the prophet of doom, has witnessed to the tension within the heart of God, to the wrathful love of God; therefore he has witnessed to the cross.

Wenn diese Spannung--obschon der Christ noch täglich in ihr steht--grundsätzlich überwunden ist, so durch jenes Wunder von Gott her, das mit Kreuzestod und Auferstehung Jesu Christi geschehen ist; an diesem Ort zeigt sich, dass Gottes Liebe seinen Zorn überwunden hat. Davon aber konnte das Alte Testament, konnte ein Amos noch nicht reden.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup>Hesse, "Amos 5:4-6:14f.," op. cit., p. 17.

## CHAPTER III

### HOSEA: GOD'S REJECTED LOVE

#### The Call of Hosea: God's Programme

Introducing the description of Yahweh's command to Hosea to marry a harlot is the title: "The beginning of Yahweh's speaking through Hosea" (t<sup>e</sup>hillat dibber yhwh b<sup>e</sup>hōsēa<sup>c</sup>).<sup>1</sup> The call of Hosea follows immediately; through Hosea's words and deeds Yahweh will communicate to Israel his word of judgment (1:3ff.) and of grace (3:1). Thus, in this "beginning of Yahweh's speaking," that is, in Hosea's call and marriage, the basic programme of Yahweh's dealings with his people becomes evident. Hosea's conception of the nature of Yahweh is based on his call, and all the oracles in the rest of his book grow out of this basic revelation. However, Hosea 1 and 3 present some very difficult problems of interpretation, and these must be discussed before the theological meaning of his marriage can become clear.

Some modern scholars share Luther's view that Gomer was not really a harlot, but she and her children had to bear this name as a symbol for the people.<sup>2</sup> The realism of the account and Yahweh's explicit command

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<sup>1</sup>Literally, the Hebrew reads, "The beginning of Yahweh spoke through Hosea." The Septuagint and Syriac apparently read d<sup>e</sup>bar.

<sup>2</sup>Martin Luther, Die Deutsche Bibel, series 3 in D. Martin Luthers Werke: kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1960), XI. 2, 182-83. Cf. L. W. Batten, "Hosea's Message and Marriage," Journal of Biblical Literature, XLVIII (1929), 265-66, who calls the description "a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms" a clumsy gloss and says, "There is not the slightest suggestion that Gomer ever had been

make this position untenable, however. Another problem concerns the meaning of the expression, ʾēšet z<sup>e</sup>nûnîm w<sup>e</sup>yaldê z<sup>e</sup>nûnîm, "a wife of harlotries and children of harlotries" (1:2). Many scholars have argued that, since the plural abstract form of the word is used instead of the concrete form (zônâ), the phrase means that Gomer was a pure woman at the time of her marriage with Hosea. But she had tendencies toward harlotry which did not become evident until after the marriage.<sup>3</sup> This theory necessarily assumes that Hosea read his later experiences with Gomer back into his call in 1:2. Many scholars choose this interpretation of Hosea's marriage, however, because they feel Hosea (and Yahweh) would have been engaged in moral turpitude had he carried out the command literally. If, on the other hand, he married what he thought was a pure woman and only later discovered her bent toward harlotry, his moral character stands

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or ever would be other than a virtuous woman." Hugo Gressmann, Die älteste Geschichtsschreibung und Prophetie Israels, 2. Abteilung in Die Schriften des Alten Testaments in Auswahl neu übersetzt und für die Gegenwart erklärt (Zweite Auflage; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1921), I, 369-70, considers the whole incident an allegory. George Adam Smith, The Book of the Twelve Prophets: Commonly Called the Minor (Revised edition; New York: Harper & Brothers, [1928]), I, 247, lists Rashi and Calvin among those who took Hosea's marriage as a parable, while the literal interpretation was favored by Ambrose, Theodoret, Cyril of Alexander, Augustine and Theodore of Mopsuestia.

<sup>3</sup>W. Nowack, Die Kleinen Propheten, III. Abteilung in Göttingen Handkommentar zum Alten Testament, edited by W. Nowack (Dritte Auflage; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1922), IV, 13; Smith, op. cit., pp. 248-51; H. Wheeler Robinson, The Cross of Hosea, edited by Ernest A. Payne (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1949), p. 13; Norman H. Snaith, Mercy and Sacrifice: A Study of the Book of Hosea (London: S. C. M. Press, Ltd., 1953), pp. 31, 35; William Rainey Harper, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea, in The International Critical Commentary, edited by Charles Briggs, Samuel Driver and Alfred Plummer (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), XXIII, cxliii, 207ff.; John Bright, A History of Israel (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959), p. 245.

unblemished. However, the simplest and most natural interpretation of Hosea's marriage is this: he did indeed go out and marry a prostitute, in order to illustrate for Israel the relationship that existed between them and Yahweh.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps the biggest problem in the interpretation of Hosea's marriage is the relationship of chapter 3 to chapter 1. In 3:1 the command is given: "Go again, love a woman who is beloved of a paramour and is an adulteress; even as Yahweh loves the people of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins." There are three possible interpretations for this passage. It may be denied authenticity on the ground that it represents a later view of Yahweh.<sup>5</sup> Or, since chapter 3 is in the first person while chapter 1 is in the third person, chapter 3 might be a parallel account of the same incident recorded in chapter 1.<sup>6</sup> The

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<sup>4</sup>Gerhard von Rad, Theologie des alten Testaments (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1960), II, 151, thinks Gomer was a woman who participated in the fertility cult; Herbert G. May, "An Interpretation of the Names of Hosea's Children," Journal of Biblical Literature, IV (1936), 287, assumes she was a cultic prostitute (cf. 4:10); Theodore H. Robinson and Friedrich Horst, Die Zwölf Kleinen Propheten, in Handbuch zum Alten Testament, edited by Otto Eissfeldt (Zweite Auflage; Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1954), XIV, 17, think that Gomer, a temple priestess, had already borne children before her marriage to Hosea.

<sup>5</sup>Batten, op. cit., pp. 271-73, says, "It was one of those innumerable scraps produced in the late days of Israel," with the discipline of the woman representing the exile. Cf. May, op. cit., p. 285, who finds no trace of an unfaithful wife in Hosea; and Karl Marti, Das Dodekapropheton, in Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament, edited by Karl Marti (Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1904), XIII, 33-34.

<sup>6</sup>John Paterson, The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), p. 43; Adolphe Lods, The Prophets and the Rise of Judaism, translated by S. H. Hooke (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1955), p. 97; and Ernst Sellin, Das Zwölfprophetenbuch, in Kommentar zum Alten Testament, edited by Ernst Sellin (Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1922), XII, 35-36.

third possibility, and the one that the evidence as a whole seems to support, is that chapter 3 is a sequel to chapter 1. The עֹד ("again") in 3:1 suggests this interpretation. The symbolism of winning back an erring wife seems to be required by the analogy to Yahweh's love for wayward Israel (3:1). And the whole effect of the extended oracle in chapter 2 is to provide a transition from the separation implied in 1:9 to the reclaiming of Gomer in 3:1-2 (cf. 2:4ff. with 2:16ff.).<sup>7</sup> In connection with 3:1, some scholars have made a great issue out of the indefinite אִשָּׁה ("woman"), thinking this indicates that Hosea was here ordered to love another woman, not Gomer. But the symbolism of the relationship between Yahweh and Israel would be impaired if this were the case.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Concurring with this interpretation are a large number of scholars, including von Rad, op. cit., p. 151; Smith, op. cit., p. 265; H. W. Robinson, op. cit., pp. 16-17; John Mauchline, "The Book of Hosea," The Interpreter's Bible, edited by George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), VI, 561; Fidelis Buck, Die Liebe Gottes beim Propheten Osee (Rome: Tipografia Pio X, 1953), p. 12; Artur Weiser, Das Buch der zwölf kleinen Propheten, in Das Alte Testament Deutsch, edited by Volkmar Hertrich and Artur Weiser (3. Auflage; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959), XXIV, 37; H. H. Rowley, "The Marriage of Hosea," Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, XXXIX (1956-57), 224; and Martin Buber, The Prophetic Faith, translated from the Hebrew by Carlyle Witton-Cavies (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), pp. 112-13. Francis Sparling North, "Hosea's Introduction to His Book," Vetus Testamentum, VIII (1958), 429-32, lists detailed evidence from manuscripts to show that chapter 1 was very likely originally in the first person.

<sup>8</sup>Douglas Tushingham, "A Reconsideration of Hosea, Chapters 1-3," Journal of Near Eastern Studies, XII (1953), 151ff., 159, argues that Hosea won legal authority over this woman by buying her from the cultic sanctuary; thus he could keep her from plying her trade, which he had not been able to do with Gomer. Emil Balla, Die Botschaft der Propheten, edited by Georg Fohrer (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1958), p. 110, also considers this a different woman. On the other hand, Hans Schmidt, "Die Ehe des Hoseas," Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, LXII (1924), 268, argues that Gomer, after leaving Hosea, had become a temple slave, and now Hosea bought her back (3:2).

One more question remains to be discussed before the theological meaning of Hosea's marriage can be stated. Did Hosea, after years of experience with Gomer, read his call back into his marriage? This would mean that from his own love he came to know Yahweh's love. A majority of scholars have accepted this position.<sup>9</sup> Allwohn has even written a complete psychoanalysis of Hosea's marriage, concluding that he tried to suppress the drive of his sexuality, but that it came to the surface in the ecstasy exhibited in 1:2.

Es ist ja bekannt, dass Menschen, die sich garnicht genugtun können, Unsittliches aufzuspüren und in seiner Verwerflichkeit zu schildern, das nur tun, weil sie dauernd gegen ihre eigene grosse Sinnlichkeit kämpfen müssen, und weil ihnen auch die ablehnende Beschäftigung mit diesen Dingen Befriedigung gewährt.<sup>10</sup>

It is certainly possible that Yahweh could have brought Hosea to a gradual consciousness of his call. But apparently Yahweh rarely used this method; he pulled Amos from following the flock and forced Jeremiah into his office against his will (Amos 7:15; Jer. 1:4ff.). And so also with Hosea; Yahweh had a message to speak through him which he was to make plain to the people by a symbolic act. It is very likely that Hosea's own marital experience deepened his understanding of Yahweh's

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<sup>9</sup>Among them are Smith, op. cit., p. 251; Paterson, op. cit., p. 44; Nowack, op. cit., p. 13; Weiser, op. cit., p. 17; Snaith, op. cit., p. 35; Leroy Waterman, "The Marriage of Hosea," Journal of Biblical Literature, XXXVII (1918), 197; John Bright, The Kingdom of God: The Biblical Concept and Its Meaning for the Church (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953), p. 74; and E. Osty, Amos Osee (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1960), p. 64.

<sup>10</sup>Adolf Allwohn, Die Ehre des Propheten Hosea in psychoanalytischer Beleuchtung (Giessen: Verlag von Alfred Topelmann, 1926), pp. 54ff. O. R. Sellers, "Hosea's Motives," American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures, XLI (July, 1925), 244ff., attempts to explain Hosea's marriage from martyr, sadistic, exhibitionistic, and nutrition motives.

love; but the initiative came from Yahweh (1:2; 3:1).<sup>11</sup>

As a result of the above discussion, the marriage of Hosea may be summarized in this way: Hosea, obeying a command from Yahweh, married a known harlot, giving symbolic names to three children that were born after their marriage. She proved unfaithful to him and eventually left him. Upon receiving a second command from Yahweh, Hosea went and bought her back out of the slavery into which she had fallen and put her through a period of discipline. The final outcome of his marriage with her is not reported.<sup>12</sup>

Hosea's dealings with Gomer and her children were to be symbolic of Yahweh's dealings with Israel (1:2; 3:1). This was the beginning (t<sup>e</sup>hillâ) of Yahweh's message through Hosea. This message would be explained and elaborated in the oracles of Hosea; but Yahweh's basic programme for Israel was acted out by Hosea in real life experience.

The first episode in Hosea's unique calling conveys a message of harsh indictment and unequivocal judgment. He married a harlot and gave symbolic names to the three children that she bore.<sup>13</sup> Hosea's act in

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<sup>11</sup>This conclusion is shared by von Rad, op. cit., pp. 151-52; T. H. Robinson, op. cit., p. 17; Sellin, op. cit., pp. 10, 24-25; Gressmann, op. cit., p. 369; Rowley, op. cit., pp. 231-32; and Helmuth Frey, Das Buch des Werbens Gottes um seine Kirche: Der Prophet Hosea (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1957), pp. 11-12.

<sup>12</sup>Rowley, op. cit., pp. 225ff., after a more thorough discussion of the evidence than is possible here, reaches ultimately the same conclusion. Cf. also Sydney Lawrence Brown, The Book of Hosea, in Westminster Commentaries, edited by Walter Lock and D. C. Simpson (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1932), XXV, lff.

<sup>13</sup>The text seems to indicate that the first child was Hosea's, but the last two were not fathered by him; cf. lô in 1:3b, which is missing in 1:6a,8b. So Rowley, op. cit., p. 229; and Smith, op. cit., p. 252.

marrying Gomer was to serve as an indictment of the people: "for the land commits great harlotry in forsaking Yahweh" (1:2). This act was different from most other prophetic actions in that it illustrated the present state of the people; they had proven unfaithful to the marriage relationship which had existed between them and Yahweh in the covenant. For at least six years this indictment was portrayed before their eyes,<sup>14</sup> and the description of Yahweh's judgment deepened with the birth of each child. The divinely given name of the first son, yizr<sup>e</sup>ce<sup>l</sup> ("Jezreel"), referring to the specific bloody acts of Jehu (2 Kings 9-10) but perhaps used as a Sammelbegriff for Israel's guilt in general,<sup>15</sup> was to be interpreted: "I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel" (1:5). After several years a daughter was born, who was given the name lō<sup>ʔ</sup> ruhamâ ("Not Pitied"). The possibility of grace existed no longer: "I will never more have pity (ʔarahēm) on the house of Israel, that I should forgive them at all" (1:6).<sup>16</sup> After several years of living under this dire judgment, the people received the final sentence. A second son was born to Gomer, and Yahweh told Hosea to call the name of this child lō<sup>ʔ</sup> ʔammî ("Not My People"). The child was to be a living witness to the fact that the covenant between Yahweh and Israel had been abrogated: "You

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<sup>14</sup>The oriental practice of waiting at least two years before weaning a child would imply this. Cf. Frey, op. cit., p. 15; and Smith, op. cit., p. 252.

<sup>15</sup>So Buck, op. cit., p. 4. May, disregarding most of the information given, thinks Jezreel was chosen as an appropriate name for the offspring of a union with a cultic prostitute; op. cit., p. 289.

<sup>16</sup>Verse 7, excepting Judah from the cessation of divine mercy, is most unlikely at this point; cf. Smith, op. cit., p. 221; and Weiser, op. cit., p. 20.

are not my people, and I am not your God" (1:9).<sup>17</sup>

In spite of the judgment and indictment which Hosea proclaimed against the people by living with Gomer for these years, there remained a slight ray of hope: as long as Hosea did not divorce Gomer, it meant that Yahweh still had not completely repudiated Israel. But even this grim hope was soon extinguished. It is not clear whether Hosea actually divorced Gomer, or whether she simply left him. At any rate, their marriage came to an end. And Hosea leaves no doubt about the state of the "marriage" between Yahweh and Israel: it is over (1:9). In 2:4 Yahweh even uses the legal divorce formula in speaking judgment on Israel: "She is not my wife, and I am not her husband."<sup>18</sup>

The judgment seems to be irreversible. But then comes the unexpected: Yahweh still loves his people (3:1). And Hosea was to proclaim also this message to Israel by his actions. The command came: "Go again, love a woman beloved of a paramour and an adulteress; as Yahweh loves the Israelites, even though they keep turning to other gods and love cakes of raisins."<sup>19</sup> In spite of all that had happened (the  $\text{c}^{\text{od}}$  implies a world

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<sup>17</sup>The Hebrew text reads, "and I will not be to you." However, the versions support the reading  $\text{y}^{\text{elohêkem}}$  instead of  $\text{y}^{\text{ehyê lakem}}$ . The meaning is clear: the covenant formula (Lev. 26:12) is negated. Cf. Nowack, *op. cit.*, p. 15; Buck, *op. cit.*, p. 8; Weiser, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>18</sup>Curt Kuhl, "Neue Dokumente zum Verständnis von Hosea 2:4-15," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, LII (1934), 102-09, gives evidence from Assyrian documents to show that 2:4 is a legal divorce formulation; cf. also Cyrus H. Gordon, "Hosea 2:4-5 in the Light of New Semitic Inscriptions," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, LIV (1936), 277-80, who finds a passage where the children are commanded to strip the clothes off their mother (cf. Hos. 2:4-5).

<sup>19</sup> $\text{y}^{\text{ahêb}}$  is used four times in this command: marital love, adulterous love, divine love and idolatrous love; cf. Buber, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

of experience), Hosea is commanded to "love" Gomer. In this way he is to demonstrate to Israel what Yahweh's love is like. "It is a love which nothing can destroy, not all her waywardness, nor her apostasy."<sup>20</sup> No doubt Hosea's own heart was in accord with Yahweh's command; he loved Gomer and bought her back. Yet he knew that his love had to be harsh with her in order to cause her character to change. So he isolated her and refused to consummate the marriage for a period of time.<sup>21</sup> The outcome of this second attempt at marriage is not known. Hosea relates only the features which are important in demonstrating Yahweh's dealings with his people. Hosea's Gleichnishandlung shows that Yahweh's faithful love remains his essential characteristic; it shows the "quite irrational power of love as the ultimate basis of the covenant relationship."<sup>22</sup> When his love is rejected, Yahweh becomes wrathful and brings judgment upon his people (cf. 1:4ff.). But ultimately God's wrath is in the service of his love. He punishes his people as part of his total programme of salvation for them. Therefore the punishment is never an end in itself, but it is always bound up with Yahweh's grace in the accomplishing of his loving purpose for his people. Thus in judgment Yahweh will deprive

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<sup>20</sup>Norman H. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament (London: The Epworth Press, 1944), p. 113.

<sup>21</sup>The phrase in 3:3b, w<sup>e</sup>gam ʔanî ʔēlāyik, could also mean that only Hosea will be the woman's lover; however, the discipline implied (cf. "many days") indicates that Hosea also would keep away from her for a period. See Weiser, op. cit., p. 38; Smith, op. cit., p. 267; and Buck, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

<sup>22</sup>Walther Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, translated from the German sixth edition by J. A. Baker (London: S. C. M. Press, Ltd., 1961), I, 251.

the people of leaders and cultus (in the exile), in order to cause them to return trembling to Yahweh and his goodness in the latter days (3:5).<sup>23</sup>

Hosea says no more at this point about the relationship between the punishment and the future return to Yahweh. Yet it is clear from other oracles that Hosea did not simply expect the judgment to effect a change for the better, so that the people could again enter into the covenant relationship with Yahweh. Their nature was too sinful for that (cf. 5:4,6; 6:1ff., etc.). In chapter 2, which serves as the connecting link between chapters 1 and 3,<sup>24</sup> the punishment does indeed make the wife (Israel) long to return to her first husband. But this self-centered desire (2:9) is scarcely a full returning to Yahweh. Rather it is Yahweh himself who steps in in the midst of the judgment and effects the return of the people (2:16-25). The judgment was inescapable; yet in Yahweh himself there lay "the hope beyond tragedy of a new Exodus, a new beginning, a New Covenant."<sup>25</sup> This was possible not because of any favorable response to discipline on the part of the people, but solely because of "die gerade im Gericht wirksame, schöpferisch verwandelnde, Wiedergeburt

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<sup>23</sup>Cf. Buck, *op. cit.*, p. 12; Sellin, *op. cit.*, p. 13, who calls the punishment a *Besserungsgericht*; W. Cossmann, *Die Entwicklung des Gerichtsgedankens bei den alttestamentlichen Propheten* (Giessen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann, 1915), pp. 41, 45; and Hans Walter Wolff, "Das Thema 'Umkehr' in der alttestamentlichen Prophetie," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, XLVIII (1951), 140-41.

<sup>24</sup>Chapter 2 will be discussed in detail *infra*, pp. 74-76, 84-86, 89.

<sup>25</sup>Bright, *The Kingdom of God*, pp. 75-76; cf. also Bright, *A History of Israel*, p. 245; Buher, *op. cit.*, p. 124; and Georg Fohrer, "Umkehr und Erlösung beim Propheten Hosea," *Theologische Zeitschrift*, XI (May-June, 1955), 178-79, who speaks of "ein erlösendes Handeln Gottes" as the basis of hope for the future.

schaffende Liebe Gottes."<sup>26</sup>

Thus the theme of Hosea's whole message is given in this beginning of Yahweh's speaking through him, in his marital experience with Gomer. Here is the God of wrath, casting off his people who have rejected his love; but here is also the God whose ultimate purpose is love, recreating his people from the midst of judgment. von Rad sums up the message of Hosea's marriage:

Die flammande Empörung über den Treubruch Israels, die bevorstehende Bestrafung; aber dann auch in einem schwer zu präzisierenden Jen-seits von alledem: die Andeutung eines neuen Heilshandelns, ja eines völligen Neuanfanges mit Israel, von dem Gottes Liebe nicht lassen kann.<sup>27</sup>

#### Yahweh's Hatred for Israel

"Every evil of theirs is in Gilgal; there I began to hate them" (9:15), says Yahweh about his sinful people. Many of Hosea's oracles show just this side of Yahweh's character: in his anger he brings judgment on Israel. This part of Hosea's message corresponds in its theological truth to the first part of his marriage with Gomer (recorded in chapter 1), where the message also was judgment on Israel.<sup>28</sup> Some of the oracles appear to be based on the message implied in the names of

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<sup>26</sup>Freu, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>27</sup>Op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>28</sup>It is possible that Hosea uttered most of his oracles of judgment during this period, since it extended over quite a number of years; so Fohrer, op. cit., p. 175; and Cossmann, op. cit., p. 41. However, it seems better not to attempt to divide his oracles chronologically, assigning them to the different periods of his marital experience, since he proclaimed judgment and grace as the two concurrent realities of Yahweh's nature.

Gomer's children: "Upon her children also I will have no pity" (2:6); "I will love them no more" (9:15; cf. lō ruhāmā); "My God will cast them off" (9:17; cf. lō ammī). This aspect of God's dealings with his wayward people is given full play in Hosea.

Hosea, to a much greater degree than Amos, is heilsgeschichtlich oriented. He produces an endless battery of proofs from the past history of the people of God to show that, in spite of Yahweh's unending care and patience, they have always been stubborn and rebellious. Hosea throws in their faces the rebellions of old connected with such places as Mizpah, Tabor and Shittim (5:1-2), Adam (6:7), Gibeah (9:9; 10:9), Gilgal (9:15), and Baalpeor (9:10). Since the days of their patriarch Jacob they have been striving against Yahweh (12:4ff.); their whole history is characterized by their turning away from their God (11:2; 13:5-6). Yahweh remembers all their deeds; they are even now before his face (7:2). "In der Gegenwart Gottes ballt sich die ganze Geschichte zur neuen Aktualität einer Krisis zusammen, zum Gericht."<sup>29</sup>

The net effect of this argument from history is to provide an indisputable basis for Yahweh's judgment: the very nature of Israel is hopelessly perverted. Here Hosea makes a significant advance beyond Amos; while Amos had talked mainly about sins, individual acts of transgression, Hosea speaks of sin, of the essential perversion of the heart. This habitus of the people is described by Hosea as "a spirit of harlotry" (rūah z'nūnīm, 4:12; 5:4). Perhaps he took the expression from his own experience with Gomer. This rūah has led the people astray and will

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<sup>29</sup>Weiser, op. cit., p. 61; cf. von Rad, op. cit., p. 151.

not permit them to return to Yahweh. It is an all-compelling influence which has gained control over them, and they are helpless under its sway.<sup>30</sup> Hosea does not neglect the individual sins; however, the women's specific acts of harlotry and adultery are not the basic problem (4:13-14), but it is because of the people's "spirit of harlotry" that Hosea says, "Non potest non peccare" (cf. 5:4).

Because of the people's proclivity to evil, their relationship with Yahweh has been broken: "There is no knowledge of God (da'at ʾelōhîm) in the land" (4:1). The word da'at is the proper word of reciprocity between Yahweh and his people; he "knows" Israel (cf. Amos 3:2) and expects Israel to respond in like manner.<sup>31</sup> But because he finds no knowledge of God among his people, Yahweh "knows" them in judgment and rejects them (Hos. 5:3; 4:6). For they are like a heated oven (7:4), a cake not turned (7:8), a useless vessel (8:8). "Their heart is deceptive (hālaq); now they will bear their guilt" (10:2). "My people are bent on turning away from me, so they are appointed to the yoke" (11:7).<sup>32</sup>

The concupiscentia of Israel, so plain in the past and still very much in evidence in the present, is seen as a betrayal of Yahweh's love. Hosea is more concerned about the personal character of the relationship

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<sup>30</sup>Cf. the "spirit of jealousy" in Num. 5:14,30. Snaith, Mercy and Sacrifice, pp. 84-85, finds some thirty-five cases of rûah used with this meaning in the Old Testament. H. W. Robinson, op. cit., p. 39, feels this view of man's nature is something new in the history of religion.

<sup>31</sup>Buber, op. cit., p. 115. Hans Walter Wolff, "'Wissen um Gott' bei Hosea als Urform von Theologie," Evangelische Theologie, XII (1952-53), 533, feels da'at ʾelōhîm is the proper Hebrew word for "theology."

<sup>32</sup>The Hebrew reads, "My people is hung up to my backsliding."

between Yahweh and Israel than Amos had been, and this gives a greater intensity to the judgment that comes as a result of the rejection of that love.<sup>33</sup> Hosea paints in great detail the loving concern Yahweh had shown for his people in the past and still wished to show for them in the present. But always the reaction of the people was the same: they will have none of it. Yahweh found Israel in the wilderness, taught him to walk, trained and strengthened his arms, bent down and fed him (9:10; 7:15; 11:3-4). Yet the more he called them the more they went the other way (11:2), devising evil against him (7:15) and finally forgetting him (13:6). Yahweh still yearns to bring his people back to himself and restore their fortunes (6:11; 7:13), but he finds them utterly unresponsive. The divine heart cries out in frustration over the obduracy of the people: "What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?" (6:4); "How long will it be?" (8:5). And the sting of his spurned love comes out: "None of them calls upon me" (7:7); "Yet they do not return to Yahweh their God, nor seek him, for all this" (7:10). "Fast wie eine Klage im Munde Gottes, aus der das Mitleid mit den verführten Gottesvolk spricht, klingt das Wort":<sup>34</sup> "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (4:6).

It is this disillusioned, rejected love of Yahweh which turns into hatred for Israel<sup>35</sup> that fills Hosea's proclamation of judgment with its

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<sup>33</sup>Cossmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 158-59, 172; Buber, *op. cit.*, p. 122. H. W. Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 45, points out that it is God's grace which reveals the full obduracy of Israel's heart.

<sup>34</sup>Weiser, *op. cit.*, pp. 45, 60; cf. Buber, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

<sup>35</sup>Hosea (and the other prophets) use anthropopathic language in describing Yahweh's nature; finally, however, any language used to describe God must be anthropomorphic or anthropopathic; *infra*, pp. 225-29.

fierceness. The terrible judgment is coming, and behind it stands Yahweh himself, "dessen enttäuschte Liebe zur grausamen Rache wird."<sup>36</sup> Yahweh's anger makes no distinction between the sin and the sinner (9:15):

Every evil of theirs is in Gilgal;  
there I began to hate them (šēnē>tîm).  
Because of the wickedness of their deeds  
I will drive them out of my house.  
I will love them no more.

Even as he had fought for Israel in the holy wars of old, now he turns against his people with the fierceness of a wild beast:

For I will be like a lion to Ephraim,  
and like a young lion to the house of Judah.  
I, even I, will rend and go away,  
I will carry off, and none shall rescue (5:14; cf. 10:7-8).

He who promised to take away all sickness from his people (Deut. 7:15) will now be "like pus<sup>37</sup> to Ephraim, and like dry rot to the house of Judah" (Hos. 5:12). Hosea, like Amos, pounds home to the surprised people that it is their very own God who has become their adversary (cf. also 2:4ff., 9; 4:6; 5:2; 7:12-13; 8:10, 13-14; 9:9, 12, 15-18; 10:10; 13:9).

Weiser remarks,

Der Schmerz Gottes, dass Israel seine Gnade nicht erkannt hat und seines Gottes vergass, ist der Grundton, der das Ganze beherrscht, die enttäuschte Liebe Gottes ist der letzte Beweggrund seines Einschreitens gegen das Volk.<sup>38</sup>

Alongside the active role in coming against his people in judgment Yahweh

<sup>36</sup>Weiser, op. cit., pp. 75, 97.

<sup>37</sup>G. R. Driver, "Difficult Words in the Hebrew Prophets," Studies in Old Testament Prophecy: Presented to Professor Theodore H. Robinson by the Society for Old Testament Study on His Sixty-fifth Birthday, August 9th 1946, edited by H. H. Rowley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1950), pp. 66-67, gives evidence for translating ʿaš as "pus" instead of "moth."

<sup>38</sup>Op. cit., p. 26; cf. von Rad, op. cit., p. 155.

also plays a passive role, although it is no less fearful. He withdraws from his people, so that, even though they come seeking him, they will not be able to find him (5:6,15; 9:12).

Überall tritt Jahwe direkt oder als vom Hintergrunde her seine Organe lenkender Gerichtsurheber hervor. Bald wirkt er passiv, indem er sich zurückzieht und dem Volke die Lebensbedingungen nimmt (2:11f.; 5:6,15; 9:12); bald tritt er aktiv mit ungeheurer Wucht als Israels Feind auf. Wir verstehen dieses stark hervortretende persönliche Gerichtswirken Jahwes und die Leidenschaft seiner Gerichtsstimmung durchaus; sie fließt konsequent aus dem Hoseanischen Gottesbegriff.<sup>39</sup>

Hosea says little about the Wie of the judgment; he is interested primarily in the Dass. His certainty of the judgment grows out of his conception of Yahweh, so he proclaims Yahweh as the agent of the destruction. There are, however, some references to destruction by an enemy (8:3; 10:14f.; 11:6). He sees Assyria as a place of exile, but alongside this he also speaks of a reversal of the exodus, when Israel will once more be brought back into Egypt (8:13; 9:3,6; 11:5). There is also a suggestion that the people's sinful condition is itself a part of the divine judgment (4:17; 5:4; 12:15).<sup>40</sup>

Thus much of Hosea's message is characterized by unrelenting doom, brought about by the fierce hatred which Yahweh has for his people because they have rejected his love. The judgment that is coming on the people will be nothing short of total destruction. But there is more to the story of Hosea's marriage than divorce, and there is more to Yahweh's message through Hosea than only judgment.

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<sup>39</sup>Cossmann, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>40</sup>H. W. Robinson, op. cit., p. 43; von Rad, op. cit., p. 154; Weiser, op. cit., pp. 49, 51.

## Yahweh's Judgment As Discipline

After Hosea bought Gomer back, he disciplined her, apparently in hopes that she would change her way and respond to his love. Hosea punished Gomer because of his love for her. And this was intended in some way to be symbolic of Yahweh's love for Israel: Yahweh's love punishes in order to accomplish his purpose of salvation for the people.

For the children of Israel shall dwell many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or teraphim. Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek Yahweh their God and David their king; and they shall come in fear to Yahweh and to his goodness in the latter days (3:4-5).

On the basis of this passage, scholars have held that, although Hosea presents Yahweh's judgment in stark colors, ultimately the purpose of the punishment is pedagogic. It is to cause the people to see the error of their ways and to cause them to repent and return to Yahweh. Instead of Strafgericht it becomes Erziehungsgericht and Besserungsgericht.<sup>41</sup>

To a certain extent it is true that God's purpose in judgment is to lead to repentance. The very fact that he was sending Hosea to proclaim judgment on his people indicates that repentance was still a possibility, and that Yahweh wished this for his people. Some of Hosea's oracles imply that the punishment God brought on Israel was intended to lead them to repentance. In chapter 2, Hosea's action in disciplining Gomer is

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<sup>41</sup>Cf. Cossmann, op. cit., p. 172; Buck, op. cit., p. 76, states: "Wenn daher Jahwe seinem Volke sich entzieht und es dem Schicksal und der Heimsuchung überlässt, so will er wohl dadurch strafen; die letzte und hauptsächlichste Absicht aber ist, das Volk zu bewegen,—man könnte beinahe sagen, zu 'nötigen'—damit es in sich gehe und zu Jahwe zurückkehre." Cf. also Weiser, op. cit., p. 13; H. W. Robinson, op. cit., p. 57; Brown, op. cit., p. 20.

paralleled in Yahweh's dealing with his people who have forsaken him. He asks the "children" to plead with their "mother" to turn from her harlotry, lest he punish her without pity (2:4-6). The plea meets with no success, so Yahweh uses discipline:

Therefore I will hedge up her way with thorns; and I will build a wall against her, so that she cannot find her paths. She shall pursue her lovers, but not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them. Then she will say, "I will go and return to my first husband, for it was better with me than now" (2:8-9).

Weiser places these verses after 2:15, for he thinks they show how the judgment (2:11-15) is changed into renewed grace from Yahweh (2:16ff.). Thus the punishment causes the people to repent and return to Yahweh, where they find grace.<sup>42</sup> A similar passage is 5:15: "I will return again to my place, until they acknowledge their guilt (cad ʾašer yeʾšemû) and seek me." Here it is stated that, even when Yahweh withdraws from his people, he is still at work, hoping that this drastic measure will bring the people to realize their guilt and turn to seek him. So Weiser says, "Gottes Gericht ist nicht Vernichtungswille; der Gerichtsgedanke lässt sich bei Hosea nicht lösen von dem Glauben an den erziehenden gnädigen Heilswillen Gottes."<sup>43</sup> The fact that the word yāsar ("discipline") is

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<sup>42</sup>Op. cit., p. 29. Cf. also Buck, op. cit., pp. 25-26; J. A. Sanders, The Old Testament in the Cross (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1961), p. 89; Th. C. Vriezen, An Outline of Old Testament Theology, translated from the Dutch second edition by S. Neuijen (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), p. 359.

<sup>43</sup>Op. cit., p. 56. Cf. Buck, op. cit., p. 51; and Fohrer, op. cit., pp. 165-67, who calls Yahweh's withdrawal a Läuterungsgericht. Snaitch, Mercy and Sacrifice: a Study of the Book of Hosea, pp. 58-60, thinks the word ʾāšām used in this passage indicates that Israel is paying the full penalty in the judgment, so the slate will be clean for a fresh start.

used in 7:12 and 10:10 would support the view that the punishment is intended to cause the people to repent.

But an examination of the evidence shows that Hosea did not proclaim a disciplinary judgment. Yahweh wanted his people to repent when he sent disciplinary judgments in the past. But his will for the people was always frustrated; just as they failed to respond to his loving care, so they also failed to respond to his judgments with wholehearted repentance. The discipline imposed on mother Israel does have an effect, to be sure, for she says, "I will go and return to my first husband, for it was better with me then than now" (2:9). But this is hardly true repentance; the return to Yahweh is motivated by self-interest, and there is no regret expressed over the sins committed. As Brown states, she does not "use the language of true repentance: she merely expresses a desire for something different from her present lot."<sup>44</sup> The next verse follows in its proper place and shows that Yahweh is sorrowed over her refusal to return to him in love: "But she did not know that it was I who gave her the grain . . . ." (2:10). The repentance of the people is not the connecting link between judgment and grace. Rather, in the midst of the judgment (2:11-15) Yahweh himself steps in and recreates the people in his grace, giving them as bridal gifts the qualities of the heart that will bring them into full fellowship with him once more (2:16-17, 21-22).

The passage in 5:15ff. also shows that the punishment of Israel leads to no true repentance. The whole section 5:8-6:6 appears to be one oracle, growing out of the background of the Syro-Ephraimic war of

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<sup>44</sup>Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

733 B. C. (2 Kings 16:5-9). An Aramean-Israelite coalition under Rezin and Pekah attacked Judah with the intention of forcing her to join them in resisting Assyria. King Ahaz of Judah appealed to Tiglath-pileser for help, and the Assyrian ruler gladly smashed the coalition. It is probable that Judah attacked Israel from the south as Assyria came upon them from the north (Hos. 5:8-10); thus also Judah incurred Yahweh's displeasure for overstepping his will for them (5:10; cf. Is. 7:1ff.). The net result of the affair was that Israel was reduced to a rump state (Hos. 5:11), and both Judah and Israel became vassals to Assyria (2 Kings 16:7-8; Hos. 5:13).<sup>45</sup> The point Hosea is making in using this contemporary affair is this: the people did not understand that Yahweh was the one directing their history; it was to him that they should submit and direct their plea for help, not Assyria.

When Ephraim saw his sickness, and  
 and Judah his wound,  
 then Ephraim went to Assyria,  
 and sent to the king who contends.  
 But he will not be able to heal you  
 or cure your wound.  
 For I will be like a lion to Ephraim,  
 and like a young lion to the house of Judah.  
 I, even I, will rend and depart,  
 I will carry off, and none shall rescue (5:13-14).

It is against this background that the remainder of the oracle (5:15-6:6) must be understood. Yahweh withdraws from his people, giving them one final opportunity to see in the harshness of judgment a summons

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<sup>45</sup>This interpretation of Hos. 5:8-6:6 is argued in much detail by Albrecht Alt, "Hosea 5:8-6:6: Ein Krieg und seine Folgen in prophetischer Beleuchtung," Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1953), II, 163-87. Cf. also Weiser, op. cit., pp. 54-56; and Sellin, op. cit., pp. 48ff.

to repent (5:15). There is indeed (as in 2:9) a reaction on the part of the people. In their distress they seek Yahweh, exhorting one another with a liturgy of repentance:

Come, let us return to Yahweh;  
 for he has torn, and he will heal us;  
 he has smitten, and he will bind us up.  
 He will revive us after two days;  
 on the third day he will raise us up,  
 and we shall live before him.  
 Let us know, let us pursue after knowing Yahweh.  
 Like the dawn, his going forth is certain;  
 he will come to us like the showers,  
 like the late rains watering the earth (6:1-3).

Here is a return to Yahweh; but once again it is only shallow repentance. The people have failed to recognize their real situation before Yahweh, they have no real conviction of sin. Their words are designed to sound pious, "mais ce retour est superficiel, éphémère, dénué de la disposition fondamentale exigée par Yahvé: l'amour."<sup>46</sup> The repentance is too easy; the people think that the first movement on their part will suffice to win Yahweh's favor once again. They have learned a lesson from Yahweh's loving care and faithfulness in the past, but it is the wrong lesson: now they think of him as an indulgent grandfather. One is reminded of Heine's dying jest: "Dieu me pardonnera; c'est son métier."<sup>47</sup> The people do at last realize that their own God is smiting them. But he has shown himself to be so loving and faithful to his elected people in the past, comparable to the faithfulness of the dawn and the late rains, that they are confident he will revive them and take them back in two or three

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<sup>46</sup>Osty, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

<sup>47</sup>Cf. George A. F. Knight, Hosea: Introduction and Commentary (London: S. C. M. Press, Ltd., 1960), pp. 77-78.

days, that is, in a short period of time.

Die Sicherheit, mit der die Gemeinde sich der Zuwendung Gottes wie eines Naturvorganges versieht, die Art, wie sie seine Wendung vom Zorn zur Gnade mit der Promptheit des Wechsels zwischen Nacht und Tag, Dürre und Regen erwartet, grenzt an Leichtfertigkeit,<sup>48</sup>

Yahweh receives this shallow liturgy of repentance with incredulity and impatience; in frustration he utters his cri de coeur:

What shall I do to you (mâ ṣa'ēsê lekā), O Ephraim,  
 what shall I do to you, O Judah?  
 Your love (hasdekem) is like a morning cloud,  
 and like the dew that goes away early (6:4).<sup>49</sup>

Yahweh's "no" to the people is spoken more in pain than in anger, for, in respecting their freedom, he is helpless before their duplicity. He wants to bring them to true repentance, but they refuse to permit him to cut to their hearts with his judgment. "Aus ihr klingt der Schmerz der Ratlosigkeit, die vor dieser letzten Grenze Halt machen muss."<sup>50</sup> At this impasse, it is no more possible to hope that the judgment will have

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<sup>48</sup>Frey, op. cit., pp. 142ff., 147. Snaith, Mercy and Sacrifice: a Study of the Book of Hosea, pp. 61-62, thinks that 6:1-3 indicates a genuine new beginning in the people. However, scholars are almost unanimous in judging this "return" to be only false repentance. Cf. Alt, op. cit., p. 185; Smith, op. cit., p. 283; Knight, op. cit., p. 77; H. W. Robinson, op. cit., pp. 59-60; Weiser, op. cit., pp. 57-58; Harper, op. cit., p. 284; Mauchline, op. cit., p. 624; Johann Jakob Stamm, "Eine Erwägung zu Hosea 6:1-2," Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, LVII (1939), 268; Norman Charles Habel, "The Divine Love Motif in Hosea and Jeremiah" (Unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1956), p. 29; and Brown, op. cit., pp. 55-56. Weiser, op. cit., p. 57, explains 6:2, with its hope of a "resurrection," from the vegetation gods' cult; however, 6:1 indicates that not death and resurrection but wounding and healing are the items involved in the minds of the people.

<sup>49</sup>Sellin, op. cit., pp. 52ff., understands 6:4a in the sense, "wie kann ich dir helfen!"; while Nowack, op. cit., p. 42, takes ṣa'ēsê in sensu malo. Either way, the meaning the same: Yahweh is at his wits' end.

<sup>50</sup>Frey, op. cit., pp. 145-46.

a disciplinary effect on the people. All that is left is Strafgericht.

The "therefore" of judgment in deadly earnest follows:

Therefore (ʕal kēn) I have hewn them by the prophets,  
I have slain them by the words of my mouth,  
and my judgments go forth like the light (6:5).

For a people that consistently refuses to respond to God's patient care for them in grace and judgment, there is only one remedy left: they must be put to death with his annihilating judgment.

Other passages in Hosea substantiate the conclusion that no true repentance ever comes from the side of the people, no matter how much they are prodded with disciplinary judgment.<sup>51</sup> They are in anguish because of their misfortunes; however, "they do not cry to me from the heart, but they wail upon their beds" (7:14). They put forth a show of godliness, crying to Yahweh, "My God, we Israel know thee!"; but they have broken his covenant, so a vulture is over the house of Yahweh (8:1-2). They go forth to seek Yahweh, but they will never find him, for he has withdrawn from them because of their faithlessness (5:6-7). They rejoice in their cultus (9:1)<sup>52</sup> and perform ritual acts to Yahweh, but sacrifice without steadfast love can only incur Yahweh's wrath (9:4; 6:6; 2:11). Ultimately, it is useless to hope for repentance on the part of the people, for their nature is enslaved to a spirit which will not permit

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<sup>51</sup>Brown, op. cit., p. xxviii, recognizes this, even though he thinks Hosea looked for the coming judgment to effect a reformation.

<sup>52</sup>Dorothea Ward Harvey, "Rejoice Not, O Israel," Israel's Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg, edited by Bernard W. Anderson and Walter Harrelson (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1962), pp. 121-27, feels "Rejoice not" (ʕal tismah) of 9:1 indicates that rejoicing in the cult was felt to have some magical power to compel God's favor.

them to turn to Yahweh (4:12; 6:11-7:2).<sup>53</sup> "I know Ephraim," says Yahweh; "their deeds will not allow them (lō' yittēnû ma'allêhem) to return to their God, for the spirit of harlotry is within them" (5:3-4). Yahweh's own helplessness in the face of this obduracy is implied in the biting question:

Like a stubborn heifer,  
 Israel is stubborn;  
 can Yahweh now feed them (cattâ yir'ēm yhw)  
 like a lamb in a broad pasture (4:16)?

Some scholars hold that, in view of the statements in Hosea asking the people to repent (10:12; 12:7; 5:15), Hosea at one time in his career did hold out hope for the people's repentance but later abandoned it, looking instead simply to God's grace for Israel's salvation.<sup>54</sup> But it is quite unlikely that any chronological development in Hosea's message can be ascertained from his oracles. The possibility of repentance must always be there whenever God's judgment is being proclaimed. The purpose of this word is to turn the rebellious heart to repentance. But the word does not do this by attaching to any intrinsic responsiveness in the heart itself, but rather by laying the heart bare so that the word of grace may seize control. The word of judgment kills so that the word of grace may make alive. False repentance renders Yahweh's grace inoperative. Therefore the horrible final judgment must come to slay the heart which is so blithely confident of its ability to seek and find Yahweh's favor—in

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<sup>53</sup>On this point see supra, pp. 69-70.

<sup>54</sup>Fohrer, op. cit., pp. 170-75; Hans Walter Wolff, Dodekapropheten I: Hosea, in Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament, edited by Martin Noth (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1961), XIV. 1, p. XXII; Balla, op. cit., p. 111.

order that Yahweh's favor may indeed come.

This juxtaposition of judgment and grace in their starkest reality is demonstrated by the oracle in chapter 13, especially 13:12-14. Here Ephraim dies because of his own stupidity (cf. 13:1); the time for his birth comes, but he chooses to remain in the womb:

The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up,  
his sin is kept in store.  
The pangs of childbirth come for him,  
but he is an unwise son,  
for he does not present himself in the time  
at the mouth of the womb (13:12-13).

Ephraim is stillborn; this is God's judgment on the ability of the people of Israel to repent and turn to him. The time of decision is there, the hour of crisis: "Israel sollte zu einem neuen und besseren Leben wiedergeboren werden, und die Stunde was da. Aber das Kind ist so schwach, dass es den Weg in die Welt nicht finden dann."<sup>55</sup> It is all over, according to human logic. But then comes the miracle of Yahweh's grace: "Gerade in der eben geschilderte Lage kann sich Jahwes Macht am deutlichsten offenbaren. Aus Israel, einer verabscheuten Fehlgeburt, will er ein lebendiges Volk schaffen."<sup>56</sup> God's judgment has caused the child to be stillborn (cf. 13:9). But at precisely this point the reviving power of Yahweh's grace takes over. The word of grace rings out:

Shall I ransom them (ʔepdēm) from the hand of Sheol?  
Shall I redeem them (ʔegʾālēm) from Death?  
O Death, where are your plagues?  
O Sheol, where is your destruction?  
Repentance (nōham) is hid from my eyes (13:14).

This verse presents a number of difficulties of both translation and

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<sup>55</sup>T. H. Robinson and Friedrich Horst, op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

interpretation.<sup>57</sup> But in the light of the context the meaning seems to be this: even though Yahweh must destroy his people in the judgment, his original loving purpose for them remains unchanged; there is no "repentance" (nōham), no change of mind on his part. His judgment causes Israel to be stillborn; the people's efforts at repentance and life have ended in death. But Yahweh has power even over sheol and death; in the midst of the judgment his grace overcomes death and brings life to his people. It is a fearful struggle, the "schmerzliche Kampf des Lebenswillens Gottes mit dem Todeswillen der Gemeinde um ihre Wiedergeburt."<sup>58</sup> But it is Yahweh's love that ultimately is pronounced the winner: "Repentance is hid from my eyes."

Thus it is clear that Yahweh's grace is not granted on the condition of the people's repentance. Rather, it is "die Unbedingtheit der Liebe Jahwes als der einzigen Voraussetzung für die Heilung der Abtrünnigkeit und für das neue Leben"<sup>59</sup> which brings the people back. Yet their salvation is achieved not by Yahweh's grace alone, but by both his grace and his judgment working together as a unit.

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<sup>57</sup>The first part of the verse could be a question expecting a negative answer; cf. Snaith, Mercy and Sacrifice: a Study of the Book of Hosea, p. 51; Smith, op. cit., p. 335. However, the context seems to show that it is a deliberative question (cf. 11:8), with Yahweh's gracious purpose winning out. The word nōham ("repentance") expresses a thought similar to 11:9 and means: "I shall certainly not change my mind"; so Knight, op. cit., p. 121. The translation "wrath" is favored by Weiser, op. cit., p. 98; and Frey, op. cit., p. 278. All in all, the passage seems to be a promise that Yahweh will overcome death; thus St. Paul uses it in its proper sense (1 Cor. 15:55); cf. Weiser, op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>58</sup>Frey, op. cit., p. 276.

<sup>59</sup>Wolff, Dodekapropheten 1: Hosea, p. XXII; cf. Knight, op. cit., p. 34; Fohrer, op. cit., p. 175; H. W. Robinson, op. cit., pp. 61-62; Balla, op. cit., p. 111.

## Yahweh's Free Love for His People

Yahweh's grace, given in the midst of the judgment, recreates his people and makes them able to respond in the covenant relationship. This programme of God is made clear in chapter 2. Discipline failed to make wayward Israel repent (2:8-9), so judgment comes with full force (2:11-15). But in the midst of judgment comes the word of grace:

Therefore, behold, I will allure her (ʔānōkî m<sup>e</sup>pattēhā),  
 and I will bring her to the wilderness,  
 and I will speak tenderly to her (d<sup>e</sup>bartî ʿal libbāh).  
 And I will give her her vineyards there,  
 and make the valley of Achor a door of hope.  
 And there she will answer (ʿān<sup>e</sup>tâ) as in the days of her youth,  
 like the day when she came out from the land of Egypt (2:16-17).

Hosea looks back upon the period of the exodus from Egypt as the time of Israel's youth, when she was innocent and helpless. It was at this time that Yahweh first showed himself to be the loving father and the doting bridegroom (7:15; 9:10; 11:1-4; 12:14; 13:4-5). Yahweh now wishes to repeat this desert honeymoon. His judgment throws Israel back into her former state; the covenant formula is reversed (cf. lōʾ ʿammî, 1:9; also 9:17) and the divorce legalized (2:4). The exodus becomes an Einode as Israel returns once more to her former state in Egypt (7:16; 8:13; 9:3; 9:6; 11:5). This is the judgment, the death of the nation. Now Israel is at the Nullpunktsituation; the way is cleared for a new mighty act of Yahweh, a new exodus. As in the days of old Yahweh loved Israel and called her out of Egypt (11:1), so once more Yahweh will use his triumphing divine love to recreate Israel out of judgment. As a passionate lover he will allure (pātâ) her and speak to her like a sweet-heart (dābar ʿal lēb). He will bring her once again to their first

courting place, the wilderness (2:16). In the first exodus the period in the wilderness was the time when Yahweh was very close to his people, leading them with loving care (11:3-4). In his love Yahweh will repeat this courtship, removing the flaws that had marred the first exodus: there will be vineyards in the desert, the troublesome valley of Achor (cf. Josh. 7:24) will become a door of hope, and Israel will respond to Yahweh's love (Hos. 2:17). As von Rad states,

Hosea sieht also das neue Heilsgeschehen typologisch in dem alten vorgebildet, wobei freilich alle Störungen und Unvollkommenheiten, von denen die ältere Heilsgeschichte doch auch berichtet hat, von den Wundern des letzten Heilsgeschehens überboten sein werden.<sup>60</sup>

The response of Israel to Yahweh's new redemptive act is important: "And there she will answer as in the days of her youth" (2:17b). The verb ʿānâ is sometimes used for the response in love between a man and a woman (Ex. 32:18; cf. the noun ʿōnâ, "cohabitation," Ex. 21:10). Here in Hosea 2:17 it describes the response of Israel to Yahweh's wooing. It is a mutual response; Yahweh also "answers" Israel: "It is I who answer (ʿānîti) and look after you" (Hos. 14:9; cf. 2:21). Yet it is clear that it is the creative love of Yahweh which enables Israel to respond in love. He causes syncretism to cease (2:18-19); no longer can there be any egotistic idea of self-betterment (cf. 2:9), but now the new relationship to Yahweh "auf der Innigkeit einer Gegenliebe beruht, die Jahwe durch den Erweis seiner Liebe in ihm neu geweckt hat . . . . Wo seine Liebe

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<sup>60</sup>Op. cit., p. 156. Hos. 12:10 also seems to refer to this new act of Yahweh's love: "I will again make you dwell in tents"; cf. Fohrer, op. cit., p. 177, who calls this "ein helfendes Geschehen" for Israel's redemption. However, Nathaniel Micklem, Prophecy and Eschatology (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1926), p. 131, understands 12:10 as a threat.

Platz greift, weicht alles, was ihr entgegensteht."<sup>61</sup> It is completely grace. Yahweh is the giver, and Israel is the recipient. He gives them a covenant with nature, which had also been involved in their punishment (2:20; 2:11ff.), to demonstrate the cosmic breadth of his free grace.<sup>62</sup> And he gives to his bride as bridal gifts the very things which he requires of her in her response:

And I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness (sedeq) and in justice (mišpāt) and in steadfast love (hesed) and in mercy (rahāmīm). And I will betroth you to me in faithfulness (emûnâ); and you shall know Yahweh (2:21-22).

This God-given dowry means that Yahweh, realizing that the people could not return to him, steps in and gives them a new heart (cf. Jer. 31:31ff.; Ez. 36:26). Now Israel is recreated; instead of the indictment, "There is no knowledge of God in the land" (4:1), there is the promise, "And you shall know Yahweh."<sup>63</sup>

The oracle in 14:2ff. also serves to demonstrate that it is the free love of Yahweh which enables Israel to return to him. Here the prophet appeals to the people to return to Yahweh, speaking the words of a prophetic liturgy of repentance:<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Weiser, op. cit., p. 31. Cf. Balla, op. cit., pp. 111-12; Sanders, op. cit., p. 90; Buck, op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>62</sup>Weiser, op. cit., pp. 31-32, shows how this relates to the conception of Yahweh as creator and lord over nature and history.

<sup>63</sup>For the precise meaning of the various bridal gifts see Snaith, Mercy and Sacrifice: a Study of the Book of Hosea, pp. 71-83; and Weiser, op. cit., pp. 32-33.

<sup>64</sup>This passage, like 6:1-3, seems to be based on current liturgies of repentance; cf. Gressmann, op. cit., pp. 398-99; T. H. Robinson and Friedrich Horst, op. cit., p. 53; Frey, op. cit., pp. 284ff.; and Weiser, op. cit., p. 102.

Return, O Israel, to Yahweh your God;  
 for you have stumbled because of your iniquity.  
 Take with you words and return to Yahweh  
 say to him, "Take away all iniquity;  
 accept that which is good,  
 and we will render the fruit of our lips.  
 Assyria will not save us,  
 we will not ride upon horses;  
 and we will not again say, 'Our God,'  
 to the work of our hands.  
 In you the orphan is comforted" (14:2-3).

In contrast with the superficial repentance demonstrated in 6:1-3, here Hosea calls for a demonstration of true repentance. Included in this confession are the recognition that the judgment has come because of the people's own iniquity, the prayer that Yahweh will take away iniquity, and the rejection of dependence on anything other than Yahweh for salvation. It is true that this is an ideal liturgy of repentance, placed into the people's mouth by the prophet. Yet Hosea uses it to show that repentance is indeed possible, for the love of Yahweh will take away the people's iniquity and enable them to return to him. Yahweh's response to this anticipated expression of repentance is not a sorrowful frustration (as in 6:4), but a promise that his love has overcome his wrath:

I will heal their faithlessness ( $\text{ʔerpā} \text{ m}^{\text{e}}\text{šûbātām}$ );  
 I will love them freely ( $\text{ʔōh}^{\text{a}}\text{bēm nēdābā}$ ),  
 for my anger has turned away from them (14:5).

The very apostasy of the people, the "spirit of harlotry" which led them astray and would not permit them to return (4:12; 5:4; 11:7), will be cured through Yahweh's free grace. His anger has vent itself in judgment on the sinful nation; now his free love comes into play, the creative power which gives new birth to the people in the midst of judgment.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Buber, op. cit., p. 124; Weiser, op. cit., p. 103; Frey, op. cit., p. 293; H. W. Robinson, op. cit., pp. 60-62.

The fact that this divine love is free (n<sup>e</sup>dābā) is very important. The word n<sup>e</sup>dābā is not applied to Yahweh anywhere else in the Old Testament. It is used as the technical term for the freewill offering (Lev. 22:23); other ideas associated with this word are total self-dedication (Judg. 5:2), spontaneity (Ps. 110:3), and the personal conviction of the will (1 Chron. 29:5).<sup>66</sup> Thus it is a most appropriate word to use to describe Yahweh's gracious love for Israel. It represents a sovereign love, unconditioned by any action or reaction on the part of Israel. Yahweh's love effects a spontaneous turn to grace in the midst of the judgment; yet it is not a whimsical, willkürlich, off-again-on-again feeling in Yahweh's heart. For it represents Yahweh's faithfulness in carrying out his unchanging purpose of love with his people (cf. Hos. 11:9).

An eschatology of salvation,<sup>67</sup> brought about by Yahweh's free love

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<sup>66</sup>Cf. Habel, op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>67</sup>Many scholars, failing to recognize the theological unity of Hosea's message of judgment and grace, delete most or all of the passages which represent any kind of hope for Israel's future (i.e., 2:1-3, 16-25; 3:5; 10:12; 11:8-11; 14:2-8). Batten, op. cit., pp. 259-69, believes the passages of hope are "beyond the visions even of a reasonable faith"; Hosea spoke only doom, he asserts, and asks, "How could there be any other note, unless we assume that a sane man, to say nothing of a prophet of God, could with the same breath blow both hot and cold?" Others in substantial agreement include Harper, op. cit., pp. cxliii, 360ff., 408ff.; Marti, op. cit., p. 9, whose judgment is: "Die Heilsverkündigungen stehen nicht im Einklang mit dem Inhalt des ursprünglichen Hoseabuches"; and Joh. Lindblom, "Gibt es eine Eschatologie bei den alttestamentlichen Propheten?," Studia Theologica, VI (1952), 109-10. Other scholars who allow for the authenticity of at least some of the passages of hope include Smith, op. cit., pp. 221, 234-38; T. H. Robinson and Friedrich Horst, op. cit., pp. 1, 45; Kuhl, op. cit., p. 70. This listing is merely representative. Since it has been shown above that a hope in Yahweh's grace is as much a part of Hosea's theology as is his certainty of judgment, the only reason to deny a passage of hope to Hosea must be on grammatical or historical grounds. These grounds are not found in the passages of hope listed above; cf., e.g., Weiser, op. cit., passim.

for his people, is the result of the new relationship between Yahweh and Israel. In that day there will be a new order of nature (2:23-24); the curse on nature will be lifted, and God's blessings will circulate freely. In contrast with the fertility religions, the progress of blessing is from above down, leaving no room for Baal to step in with his functions.<sup>68</sup> Now the curse implied in the names of Gomer's children can be changed into a blessing (2:25). Jezreel will indeed mean "God sows"; "Not Pitied" will receive divine pity. And the covenant abrogation proclaimed in the name of "Not My People" will be changed into a formula for the new covenant: "I will say to 'Not My People,' 'You are my people'; and he will say, 'You are my God.'" This oracle, along with the parallel passage in 2:1-3,<sup>69</sup> serves to show the great wonder of the love of Yahweh, triumphing over his wrath by transforming deadly judgment into recreating grace. The passages concerning Israel's return from exile (11:10-11; 14:7) further illustrate this. Yahweh roared like a lion in judgment (5:14; 13:7), casting off his people into exile. But now his love has triumphed, so he will once more roar like a lion, this time in grace, summoning his people to return from their exile in Egypt and Assyria. The day of salvation has dawned, and they are called to dwell and flourish once more under Yahweh's protecting shadow. "In dem Augenblick, wo der Mensch hoffungslos vor dem Nichts zu stehen glaubt, ist Gott am Werk, sein Heil

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<sup>68</sup>Cf. von Rad, op. cit., p. 156; Weiser, op. cit., p. 34.

<sup>69</sup>Hos. 2:1-3 was probably placed at the head of chapter 2 to show that the divine activity described in chapter 2 must be understood from its telos. Cf. Frey, op. cit., pp. 24-25; Weiser, op. cit., p. 23; and Hans Walter Wolff, "Der grosse Jesreeltag (Hosea 2:1-3)," Evangelische Theologie, XII (1952-53), 89-95.

zu schaffen."<sup>70</sup> Here then, in full judgment and full grace, is Yahweh's programme for his people brought to completion.

#### The Nature of Yahweh: His Rejected Love

Hosea's message to Israel, containing both the harshness of Yahweh's judgment and the power of his grace, grows out of his conception of the nature of Yahweh. This is apparent at various places in his book, but it is especially manifest in his description of his own marital experience. In his own life he experienced something of the tension between wrath and love which he knew existed in Yahweh himself.

Hosea did not learn about the nature of Yahweh through his own experience with Gomer; Yahweh took the initiative and revealed himself to Hosea. Yet Yahweh did intend for the people to learn about his wrath and love by observing Hosea's treatment of his wayward wife (1:2; 3:1). So it is not too much to assume that Hosea's own understanding of Yahweh's nature was deepened and given its characteristic form and color by his command performance with Gomer. For God makes use of human knowledge and emotions in revealing himself through men. This is what H. W. Robinson calls "the higher anthropomorphism":

But if the love of Hosea for his faithless wife does really represent, in spite of its human limitations, the love of God for Israel; if the word "love," in fact, is to be allowed any human connotation at all in regard to God, it must be because the human personality is in some sense akin to the divine (ch. 11:4) though far below it (ch. 11:9).

Thus Hosea's experience could be a means of divine revelation: "By his intimate knowledge of what Gomer's infidelity meant to himself, he entered

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<sup>70</sup>Weiser, op. cit., p. 31.

into a new sympathy with the God who is made to suffer through the sin of man."<sup>71</sup> This sympathy with the heart of Yahweh, divinely given to Hosea through revelation and experience, finds expression in his oracles where he speaks of Yahweh's relationship with Israel as that of husband and wayward wife. Harold Knight speaks of the "prophetic solidarity with the divine pathos" into which Hosea entered: "Only by feeling personally the agony of frustrated love can the prophet gain a true sympathetic realization of the wound which Israel's disloyalty has inflicted on the love of God."<sup>72</sup>

In his own experience with Gomer Hosea saw something of the frustration and sorrow which Yahweh feels when Israel rejects his tenderly offered love. Hosea says little about his own emotional involvement with Gomer. However, after at least six years of living with her he was qualified to speak about the pain of rejected love. Morgan says,

The pain and agony of the man's heart is everywhere apparent, but it had become to him an interpretation of the agony of the heart of God. In his own experience he discovered what infidelity means to love; and so, that the infidelity of Israel roused, not the wrath of God, though He was compelled by it to act in judgment, but the heart-break of God.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Op. cit., pp. 20-22, 30; cf. pp. 26, 45-46.

<sup>72</sup>Harold Knight, The Hebrew Prophetic Consciousness (London: Lutterworth Press, 1947), p. 140. Cf. also G. A. F. Knight, op. cit., p. 29; Eichrodt, op. cit., p. 251; Habel, op. cit., p. 14; Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament, p. 111; and Joseph M. Gettys, Hark to the Trumpet: The Message of the Prophets for the World of Today (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1948), p. 126, who states, "No man can feel and understand the redemptive love of God as Hosea presents it without having experienced it in the crucible of his own soul." Cf. also Paterson, op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>73</sup>G. Campbell Morgan, Hosea: The Heart and Holiness of God (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, Ltd., 1948), p. 10.

Yet God's rejected love did turn to wrath, Hosea knew, for his relationship with Gomer had shown him that love and hatred are closely related. It would be impossible to have neutral feelings toward one who flamboyantly scorns proffered love. This is precisely what makes the love of Yahweh such a terrible thing. Hosea saw that his love for Gomer failed, and he realized that Yahweh's love too could fail--that it did indeed fail and was rejected by his people. Yahweh did not compel them, but he allured them. Hosea's own experience taught him the frustration and anguish that Yahweh must feel (cf. 4:16; 6:4; 7:10),<sup>74</sup> the same frustration that caused Christ to weep over Jerusalem (Luke 13:34). Yahweh's love was an impassioned love, and, when it was scorned, it vented itself in wrath (Hos. 9:15; 5:14). "The anger, the sorrow, the pain throbbing in the heart are 'the sweet sad music' to which Hosea's ear is attuned."<sup>75</sup> God's bitter wrath against his people is a measure of the fiery intensity of his love. Hosea shows his solidarity with Yahweh by entering into his wrath against the people. He too was rejected and scorned by Israel (9:7-8), and he reaches a point where he intercedes for the people's punishment: "Give them, O Yahweh--what will you give? Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts" (9:14).<sup>76</sup>

Yet Hosea was commanded, as a witness to Yahweh's undying love for

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<sup>74</sup>Smith, op. cit., pp. 349, 372-79; G. A. F. Knight, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>75</sup>Harold Knight, op. cit., p. 141; Eichrodt, op. cit., p. 252, speaks of "the wrath of love."

<sup>76</sup>Weiser, op. cit., pp. 75-76, thinks this passage shows Hosea's love for Israel; since Yahweh will slay their children (9:12-13), he prays that they will have none. However, 9:14 seems rather to be an echo of Yahweh's threat against Israel; so Harold Knight, op. cit., p. 141.

Israel, to go again and "love" Gomer. In this second episode with his unfaithful wife he was to learn something of what it cost Yahweh to continue to love his sinful people in spite of their rejection of him. It is too bold to speak of Hosea's love for Gomer as "redemptive"; it is not even known whether he did actually win Gomer back. However, the fact that he picked her up once more from the state into which she had fallen and attempted to awaken a response of love in her meant that he must enter into her suffering and attempt to transform it. As H. W. Robinson states,

The spiritual price can be measured only in terms of suffering. When a holy will takes to itself and accepts the burden of responsibility for an unholy will, there is the inevitable condition that the sin is transformed in the consciousness of the holy man into suffering; he cannot share its burden on any other terms . . . . Because it is grace, it cannot stand aloof and disclaim association with the sinner; because it is holy, it can associate itself with him only on terms of suffering.<sup>77</sup>

If this is true only in a limited way in Hosea's relationship with Gomer, it is nonetheless true in its fullest dimension in Yahweh's relationship with Israel. His righteousness meant that he had to turn on Israel in wrath when they rejected his love. But this did not mean that his love was quenched; rather, it meant that it had to become a suffering love, a love that could forgive only at the cost of something. Yahweh's loving purpose for Israel would win out over his wrath, but not without a conflict in Yahweh himself. The true depth of this conflict could become manifest only in the ultimate symbol of God's wrath and love, the cross of his Son. But Hosea saw, in his solidarity with the divine pathos, the struggle in the heart of Yahweh.

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<sup>77</sup>Op. cit., p. 51; cf. Buber, op. cit., p. 112.

The great oracle which lays bare the heart of Yahweh and reveals the conflict there is 11:8-9. The oracle comes against the background of a moving description of Yahweh's father-love for his people and their rejection of him (11:1-7). The text of chapter 11 is difficult in the extreme, and the ancient versions and modern scholars have scarcely solved the problems involved.<sup>78</sup> The following translation of 11:1-5 is based on reconstruction suggested by the ancient versions and modern scholars:

When Israel was a lad, I loved him,  
 and out of Egypt I called my son.  
 But the more I called them,  
 the more they kept going away from me;  
 they kept on sacrificing to the Baals  
 and burning incense to idols.  
 Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk,  
 I lifted them up upon my arms;  
 and they did not know that I healed them.  
 With cords of a man I led them,  
 with bands of love.  
 And I was to them as one  
 who lifts the yoke on their jaws,  
 and I bent down to him and fed him.  
 He shall return to the land of Egypt,  
 and Assyria shall be his king,  
 for they have refused to return.

Here is the same story that is told throughout the book of Hosea. The tender love of Yahweh stands at the beginning of the Heilsgeschichte; but it is rejected by Israel, so Yahweh must turn in wrath against his people. The picture of a father-son relationship illustrates the same truth about Yahweh's love as does the other picture Hosea uses, the husband-wife

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<sup>78</sup>This does not necessarily mean the text is corrupt; Snaith, Mercy and Sacrifice: a Study of the Book of Hosea, p. 66, remarks, "The confusion among the translators is a true reflection of the dilemma in which Hosea finds himself," knowing that Israel must be punished but also that Yahweh's love cannot cease.

relationship. In his love Yahweh adopted Israel and called him to be his son. Yahweh was quite patient and permissive (cf. 10:11) with his son, but from the beginning Israel loved to thresh, taking advantage of Yahweh's long-suffering by engaging in syncretistic cultic practices. Yahweh, like a good father, had helped Israel through his first step in life, taught him muscular co-ordination (cf. 7:15), carried him when the going was rough, and healed his hurt when he fell. The text is uncertain; perhaps the picture changes in 11:4 to a good master kindly leading his animal, stooping over to give him food.<sup>79</sup> But Israel did not respond to Yahweh's love as a son should, and Yahweh has to say in sorrow, "They did not know that it was I." G. A. F. Knight asks, "Was this because God, in walking at the pace of his child, had so humbled himself that his child did not recognize the Godlikeness of such humility?"<sup>80</sup> Even Yahweh's paternal love must have a limit, when it is constantly scorned and rejected by a son bent on apostasy (11:7). There is nothing left for this people except judgment. So judgment comes, terrible and complete. From all appearances, Israel has died (lō y<sup>e</sup>rômēm, 11:7).

Yahweh has loved and failed; now he must punish. But at precisely this point, contrary to any human expectation, Hosea unveils the heart of God and reveals the struggle going on there.

How can I give you up (šettenkā), O Ephraim?  
 How can I deliver you up, O Israel?  
 How can I make you like Admah?  
 How can I make you like Zeboim?  
 My heart is overturned upon me,  
 together my compassion grows warm and tender (11:8).

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<sup>79</sup>So Weiser, op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>80</sup>Op. cit., p. 109.

This verse points to the tension in Yahweh between his wrath and his love. The rejection of his love demands that the people be destroyed, and yet his rejected love cannot bear to give up his dear son. The example of Admah and Zeboim, cities destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah when Yahweh turned in wrath against them (Gen. 14:2,8; Deut. 29:22), must point to the conclusion that now also Yahweh's wrath will utterly destroy the people who have sinned against him. But Yahweh's love was not destroyed, even though it changed to wrath when Israel scorned it. Now it reasserts itself:

Dabei ziegen sich der Zorn und die Liebe geradezu im Widerstreit in Gott. Gott steht sozusagen ratlos da: eigentlich müsste er Ephraim in seinem Zorne Adma und Seboim gleichsetzen, aber sein Mitleid und Erbarmen verlangt Schonung und Verziehung. . . . Und Jahwe kann die gegen Ephraim beabsichtigte Vernichtung nicht ausführen, denn dagegen wehrt sich sein Herz, seine Liebe.<sup>81</sup>

Yahweh offers no possible grounds for softening the sentence, he displays no hope that the people may yet repent, he proposes no new methods of dealing with his apostate people.

Der für menschliche Logik unausweichlichen Schlussfolgerung aus der Schuld Sodoms und dem Schicksal Gomorrhas, setzt Gott keine mildernden Umstände, keine Hoffnung auf Besserung, keine neuen Erziehungsversuche, -methoden und -mittel entgegen, sondern einfach die Enthüllung seines Herzens.<sup>82</sup>

God simply lays bare his heart through his prophet Hosea. He reveals the pain and the suffering that is caused by the clash of his will to

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<sup>81</sup>Buck, op. cit., p. 83. Cf. also Bernard W. Anderson, Understanding the Old Testament (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1957), p. 248; Frey, op. cit., p. 232; von Rad, op. cit., p. 155; Sellin, op. cit., p. 89; Eichrodt, op. cit., p. 253; G. A. F. Knight, op. cit., pp. 110-11.

<sup>82</sup>Frey, op. cit., p. 230.

love and the demand to punish. The fourfold ḡêk ("how") does not contain an implicit promise that Yahweh will not punish; rather, it is an agonizing cry born of the struggle between wrath and love, a struggle which causes Yahweh's heart to overturn and his compassion to grow hot and tender. Here is portrayed in graphic terms the depths of Yahweh's suffering love, his love which suffers in order to redeem his people out of the judgment brought about by his wrath.

The final result of the struggle within Yahweh is stated in 11:9:

I will not execute the fierceness of my anger,  
 I will not again destroy Ephraim.  
 For God I am, and not a man,  
 the Holy One in your midst;  
 and I will not come to destroy (ḡabā'ēr for be'îr).

This important verse is not without problems of interpretation. The first part of the verse could grammatically be translated as a question implying a positive answer: "Shall I not execute the fierceness of my anger, shall I not again destroy Ephraim?" Taken in this sense, the verse would become a sentence of doom on Israel, showing that, in spite of Yahweh's love, the fact that he is the Holy One in the midst of Israel requires him to destroy them completely. T. H. Robinson favors this interpretation:

For Yahweh is not a man that He should go back on His word. What He has said stands; what Israel has done will inevitably meet with its own reward. . . . A lesser love than Yahweh's would have given way and spared her, and that would have been a cruel kindness. . . . He who loves her loves her enough even to destroy her--though His own heart utterly break with the blow.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>Theodore H. Robinson, Prophecy and the Prophets in Ancient Israel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, n.d.), pp. 86-87. He also states, "Es gibt Dinge, die schlimmer sind als Vernichtung, und für Israel was es besser zu verschwinden, als den Weg weiterzugehen, dem es sich nun einmal unwiderruflich verschrieben hatte"; Theodore H. Robinson and Friedrich Horst, op. cit., p. 45. Cf. Nowack, op. cit., pp. 68-69.

However, it seems very unlikely that 11:9a should be understood as a question. No interrogative particle is used; and verses 10-11 indicate that the whole oracle should be understood as a promise and not as a threat. The passage as translated above fits very well into Hosea's theology--indeed, it provides the key for it.

In this verse it is seen that the struggle in Yahweh's heart, caused by the tension between love and wrath in the face of Israel's sin, results in the victory of Yahweh's purpose of salvation for his people. He relents from his fierce anger, and he once more calls Israel to be his son, returning them to their home from their exile in Egypt and Assyria (11:10-11). As the basis for his seeming change of heart from wrath to love Yahweh simply says: "For I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst." This is the unexpected. Usually Yahweh's holiness was thought of by Israel as that aspect of his nature which demanded that his people be free from sin and set apart (Lev. 19:2). Thus Yahweh's holiness could scarcely be a comforting thought to apostate Israel. But now Yahweh bases the triumph of his loving purpose over his wrath precisely on his holiness, on the fact that he as God is totally different from man. For human emotions are changeable, reacting to a given set of circumstances. If God had human emotions, the only thing he could do in the face of Israel's rebellion would be to destroy Israel forever. But God is not man; his holiness means that his purpose is constant and unchanging (1 Sam. 15:29; Num. 23:19; 14:11-22). He remains steadfast in his original purpose of salvation for Israel (Hos. 11:1). His actions in judgment and grace are not reactions that are dependent on Israel's responses, but Yahweh remains sovereign and free. Hence Hosea

recognized in this love the living power which is set in complete contradistinction to every potentiality of the created order. Hence for him love is part of Yahweh's nature and a basic element in holiness.<sup>84</sup>

So, ultimately, the fact that Yahweh is the Holy One in the midst of Israel is the key to the relationship between judgment and grace in all of Hosea's book. Because Yahweh's love is holy, it burns in anger against all who reject it; but again, because his love is holy, it remains love and ultimately exerts its creative power.

Yahweh's love triumphs over his wrath, proving wrath to be his opus alienum. But this does not mean that wrath is the opposite of Yahweh's love, that the triumph of love has cast wrath out from God's heart. Hosea does not describe Yahweh's love and wrath as two opposing attributes. Rather, Yahweh's wrath is thought of as the other side of his love, occurring where his love is rejected. Buck describes this relationship:

In diesem Ringen zwischen Zorn und Liebe gewinnt also die Liebe die Oberhand und gebietet dem Überwaltenden Zorn Einhalt. Wie nun aber der Zorn nicht die Liebe aus dem Herzen Gottes reißen kann, ja oft, wenn nicht immer, von der Liebe besiegt wird, so macht andererseits auch die grosse Liebe Gottes in seinem Herzen nicht jegliches Aufkommen von Zorn unmöglich. Es bleibt die Tatsache bestehen, dass, wie Osee uns zu verstehen gibt, in Gott Liebe und Zorn sein können . . . in geheimnisvoller Subordination, so dass der Zorn der Liebe gehorcht.<sup>85</sup>

This subordination of wrath to the ultimate purpose of love does not in

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<sup>84</sup>Eichrodt, op. cit., pp. 280-81. Cf. also Wolff, Dodekapropheten 1: Hosea, p. 262; Frey, op. cit., pp. 232-34; Sellin, op. cit., p. 90; Weiser, op. cit., p. 87; Kuhl, op. cit., p. 70; Fohrer, op. cit., p. 164; Osty, op. cit., p. 111; Habel, op. cit., p. 23; Brown, op. cit., p. 103; and J. Hänel, Die Religion der Heiligkeit (Gütersloh: Druck und Verlag von C. Bertelsmann, 1931), p. 87.

<sup>85</sup>Op. cit., p. 83; cf. Weiser, op. cit., p. 86.

any way detract from the fierceness of the judgment which falls on Israel. For in proclaiming the wrath of God working in judgment on his people Hosea takes no second place to Amos. But he stresses, more so than did Amos, the truth that, in the final analysis, God's wrath is redemptive. His purpose of working in both judgment and grace is not to destroy but to heal.

Thus both love and wrath are prominent in Hosea's conception of the nature of Yahweh, made real in his dealing with his people in grace and judgment. His love and his wrath work closely together; a period of grace does not follow a period of judgment, "sondern beides ist eng ineinandergefügt."<sup>86</sup> Although they are drastically different, although God's wrath kills and his love brings to life, yet both work toward the same end: salvation for God's people. However, there remains an unresolved tension between love and wrath, a tension that causes suffering in the heart of Yahweh. That this divine suffering is redemptive is only hinted at in Hosea (11:8-9). First in the cross of Christ is it manifest that the suffering of God, caused by the deepest expression of both his wrath and his love, is redemptive for the world under his judgment.

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<sup>86</sup>H. W. Hertzberg, "Die prophetische Botschaft vom Heil und die alttestamentliche Theologie," Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift, XLIII (1932), 527.

## CHAPTER IV

### ISAIAH: GOD'S HOLY LOVE

#### Isaiah's Call and Commission

Isaiah reports his call and commission in chapter 6. His call came in the form of a vision in which he beheld the glory of Yahweh and entered into a dialogue with him. This chapter is very important, for it contains the basic features of the message Isaiah was to proclaim throughout his long career. Here is the revelation of Yahweh's nature in all its terrible holiness; and here is the revelation of Yahweh's plan for his creation.

In the year that King Uzziah died (739 B. C.) Isaiah was singled out to receive an experience of Yahweh's nature and purpose which was to shape the rest of his life. One day, as he was perhaps worshipping in the temple, the earthly structure was changed into the heavenly temple, and he saw Yahweh the king sitting in exalted glory on his throne with seraphim attending him.<sup>1</sup> While covering their faces and feet before Yahweh's glory, the seraphim were chanting to one another:

Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh of hosts,  
the whole earth is full of (m<sup>e</sup>lō) his glory (6:3).

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<sup>1</sup>There is no reason to deny the authenticity of Isaiah's vision. C. F. Whitley, "The Call and Mission of Isaiah," Journal of Near Eastern Studies, XVIII (1959), 38-41, attempts to prove that Is. 6 was a description of a vision current in a later day which a compiler attributed to Isaiah. He argues that the ideas of a throne, of Yahweh exalted, of seraphim, of Yahweh's holiness, and of a person's uncleanness are "confined to passages of the exilic and post-exilic periods." This position is quite untenable.

The full impact of Yahweh's glory caused the foundations of the thresholds to shake and the temple to be filled with smoke (cf. Ex. 14:19; Ez. 10:4). In the antiphon of the seraphim is stated the ultimate goal of all history: that Yahweh be recognized as holy (qādôš), and that his glory (kābôd) become the filling up (m<sup>e</sup>lô) of all the earth. Delitzsch comments,

The design of all the work of God is that His holiness should become universally manifest, or, what is the same thing, that His glory should become the fulness of the whole earth (ch. 11:9; Num. 14:21; Hab. 2:14). This design of the work of God stands before God as eternally present; and the seraphim also have it ever before them in its ultimate completion, as the theme of their song of praise. But Isaiah was a man living in the very midst of the history that was moving on towards this goal.<sup>2</sup>

Here in Isaiah 6:3, then, is the goal of all Yahweh's work--and it is seen as already completed. The heavenly liturgy is eschatology in anticipation. The following verses show that the prophet is still in the midst of the struggle of history, that the riddle and seeming aimlessness of history continue in the present age. And yet he sees in his vision the "Enträtselung der Geschichte," as Hertrich describes it:

Die Geschichte ist entmächtigt--nicht entleert. . . . die Geschichte ist schon durchschritten, ist schon wie zum Ziel gebracht; denn diese leidvolle, furchtbare, rätselvolle Geschichte gehört Gott. Seine Herrlichkeit steht am Ziel. Und seine Heiligkeit ist die schöpferische Kraft, die in der Mitte steht und von der alles ausgeht.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Franz Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah, translated from the German by James Martin (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1869), I, 192. Cf. J. Hänel, Die Religion der Heiligkeit (Gütersloh: Druck und Verlag von C. Bertelsmann, 1931), p. III, who says, "Das Wesen der alttestamentlichen Religion wird in Durchdrungensein von der Heiligkeit Gottes gesehen."

<sup>3</sup>Volkmar Hertrich, Der Prophet Jesaja: Kapitel 1-12, in Das Alte Testament Deutsch, edited by Volkmar Hertrich and Artur Weiser (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1950), XVII, pp. XIV, 99.

The holiness of Yahweh is the guarantee that he will unfailingly accomplish his purpose in history (cf. Hos. 11:9), and that purpose is that his glory fill all the earth. This is the goal of history, and this must be the goal of the message which Yahweh's prophet is to bring to his people. Yahweh's plan for bringing creation to this goal is revealed in the remainder of Isaiah's vision: Yahweh is going to deal with his people in judgment and in grace.

Isaiah portrays his reaction to this unveiling of divine glory: "And I said, 'Woe is me, for I am lost (nidmêti); for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. For my eyes have seen the king, Yahweh of hosts'" (6:5). Isaiah was overwhelmed by the contradiction between his own sinful nature and God's holiness. That sinful man cannot see God without dying is a conviction of the Old Testament faith (Ex. 33:20). Isaiah's intimate experience of the high and exalted Yahweh, before whom even the seraphim had to shield their faces, convinces him that he is undone. The use of the perfect tense (nidmêti) shows that his demise is effected so far as his own consciousness is concerned. Before God's glory, human life becomes death. Isaiah's own feeling of sinfulness is intensified by his sense of solidarity with the people of Israel. His own death in the face of God's holiness is a fearful example of the fate which Israel will experience. Just as Isaiah dies because of his intimate encounter with the holy God, so Israel will die precisely because of her close relationship with the holy God in her midst. As Eichrodt says, "The fact that this God whose holiness is a consuming fire to anything sinful (10:17) is the God of Israel makes the future of the nation a prospect to terrify even the most

indifferent and hardened offender."<sup>4</sup> Possibly from this experience in his call vision Isaiah coined the name, "The Holy One of Israel" (q<sup>e</sup>dôš yisrā'ēl), which he used in his preaching to make plain for Israel the terror of having such a God in their midst (cf. 1:4; 10:17; 30:11).

After Isaiah confessed his sinfulness, he received a seraphic absolution. One of the seraphim took a burning coal from the altar, touched it to Isaiah's mouth, and announced: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt has turned aside, and your sin is forgiven" (6:7). Here the man who was lost before the fire of the divine holiness is brought back to life through that same holy fire. This is not only an inner cleansing, nor simply a purifying of the lips; but, pars pro toto, the whole man is destroyed and brought to life once more. In Ezekiel 10:2,6-7 the burning coals of fire are used to execute God's judgment on the guilty. In Isaiah 6:6 the burning coal executes judgment on Isaiah and is also the means of his revival. "Isaiah saw God and died; he died and rose again. He put off the old man: he became a new creation by the power of divine grace. Isaiah belongs to the class of twice-born men."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Walther Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, translated from the German sixth edition by J. B. Baker (London: S. C. M. Press, 1961), I, 280. Cf. also Th. C. Vriezen, An Outline of Old Testament Theology, translated from the Dutch second edition by S. Neuijen (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), pp. 131-33; George Buchanan Gray, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah, in The International Critical Commentary, edited by Charles Briggs, Samuel Driver and Alfred Plummer (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), XVIII, xc.

<sup>5</sup>John Paterson, The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), p. 65. Also Hertrich, op. cit., pp. 104-05; Gray, op. cit., pp. xc-xci; and Curt Kuhl, The Prophets of Israel, translated by Rudopf J. Ehrlich and J. P. Smith (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1960), p. 79.

Thus Isaiah, sinful and doomed before the majestic holiness of Yahweh, is by judgment brought to a new life. Here appears the germ of his future preaching of Yahweh's grace. God's holiness necessarily implies judgment on a sinful nation, of course; but God, in his judgment, has done something for Isaiah which he will also do for his people. The devouring fire of his holiness will destroy them; but in this judgment his holy fire will recreate them to be the holy, purified remnant (cf. 4:3-4).<sup>6</sup> It is not merely a matter of a "purifying" in the sense of removing blemishes but leaving the basic nature essentially the same. Isaiah died (6:5) and was created anew by God's judgment and grace. The same, then, can be expected to hold true for Israel as a whole.

God's act performed on Isaiah makes it possible for him to respond to the rather sorrowful summons from Yahweh: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"<sup>7</sup> Now Isaiah is ready and able to undertake the task; he answers, "Here am I, send me" (6:8). The commission given to Isaiah is a terrible one. Yahweh, scorning to call Israel by the usual designation of "my people" (ʿammî, 1:3; 3:12,15; etc.), tells Isaiah:

Go and say to this people (lāʿām hazzê):  
 "Hear and hear (šimʿû šāmōaʿ), but do not understand;  
 see and see, but do not perceive."  
 Make the heart of this people fat,  
 and make their ears heavy,  
 and shut their eyes.  
 Lest they see with their eyes,

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<sup>6</sup>See Hänel, *op. cit.*, p. 10; Paterson, *op. cit.*, p. 69; Hertrich, *op. cit.*, p. XVI; and Ernst Jenni, "Jesajas Berufung in der neueren Forschung," *Theologische Zeitschrift*, XV (1959), 336.

<sup>7</sup>The word lānû apparently has reference to Yahweh's deliberative council, which included the seraphim; so Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

and they hear with their ears,  
and understand with their hearts,  
and return and be healed (6:9-10).

Here, at the beginning of his ministry, Isaiah is given the difficult task of preaching in order to make the people unresponsive to Yahweh's message. Some scholars think these verses reflect Isaiah's bitter disillusionment in later years when he realized that all his preaching had had no effect. Blank states,

But the true sense behind the word is this: what Isaiah had to say was past belief, incredible; the people would simply be unable to hear it. Taken literally as God's word the verse is bad theology. But, taken as a prophet's anguished comment on his failure, it is good psychology. God gave Isaiah an impossible assignment.<sup>8</sup>

However, the fact that the same idea of hardening the people's hearts comes out in other oracles (cf. 29:9-12) would indicate that Isaiah was conscious of this special commission. This was to be Yahweh's strange work (28:21), his judgment upon the sinful people. It was Isaiah's task, not to bring the people to repentance, but to make the way to repentance hard. The very hardening of the people's hearts was to be God's work of judgment on them, caused by their own sinfulness; "die gottverhängte Verstocktheit ist im letzten Grunde Selbstverstockung."<sup>9</sup>

Yet the hardening of the people's hearts is not to be understood as a rational function, an inner psychological process. The Old Testament

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<sup>8</sup>Sheldon H. Blank, Prophetic Faith in Isaiah (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1958), p. 4. See also Paterson, op. cit., p. 66; and J. A. Sanders, The Old Testament in the Cross (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1961), pp. 80-82.

<sup>9</sup>Friedrich Nötscher, Die Gerechtigkeit Gottes bei den vorexilischen Propheten (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1915), p. 56.

sees no difficulty at all in making Yahweh the agent of the hardening process (cf. Ex. 4:21; 9:12; 10:1,20,27; Judg. 9:23; 1 Sam. 16:14; 18:10; 19:9; 2 Sam. 17:14). But the important thing in Isaiah 6:9ff. is that the prophet is not only to announce the hardening as God's judgment, but he is actually to bring it about by his preaching. Jenni states: "Jesaja wirklich als Bote Jahwes dem Volke das kommende Gerichtshandeln Jahwes hat ankündigen müssen. Mehr noch: er hat es als Prophet nicht nur anzukündigen, sondern auch herbeizuführen."<sup>10</sup> Through the power of the prophetic word, the dynamic, creative word (9:7), Isaiah is to wreak judgment on Israel.<sup>11</sup> The people were not to be permitted the false security of an easy repentance. Isaiah's preaching was to block the way to repentance; there would be no occasion for the people to turn of their own power and be healed. Yet this terrible judgment which Isaiah was to bring on the people must be seen as part of Yahweh's plan for bringing about his ultimate goal (6:3). This means, von Rad says,

dass wir neu lernen müssen, das Wort von der Verstockung heilsgeschichtlich zu sehen. Wer es sich psychologisch oder Frömmigkeitsgeschichtlich zurechtlegt, oder wer es sonstwie nur als Strafe versteht, der muss es als das Ende, als den Abschluss eines mehr oder minder gesetzmässig ablaufenden Prozesses verstehen. Dem widerspricht jedoch der einfache textliche Befund bei Jesaja; denn bei ihm steht sie wohl paradoxerweise, aber betont am Anfang eines heilsgeschichtlichen Ablaufes. Am Anfang, in seiner Berufung, hat Jesaja dieses Wort empfangen, und in Jes. 8:17 sagt er höchst paradox, dass er gerade auf diesen verstockenden Gott hoffe.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Op. cit., p. 335.

<sup>11</sup>Cf. Gerhard von Rad, Theologie des alten Testaments (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1960), II, 165; Hertrich, op. cit., p. 107; Jenni, op. cit., pp. 335-37.

<sup>12</sup>Op. cit., p. 166. Cf. also infra, pp. 120-22.

Just as the judgment on Isaiah (6:7) was part of God's work in renewing him, so the judgment must be seen in the service of Yahweh's total plan for his people.

Upon receiving his dreadful commission, the prophet, still standing in the midst of history, asks the question: "How long (ʿad mātai), O Adonai?" Is the judgment on the people to be the last word, or will there be a boundary to the judgment so that another word can be spoken?

"Wie lange, Herr?" ist die Frage nach der Begrenzung der Gerichte Gottes über sein Volk. Aber sie dringt nicht durch den lauten Tumult der Völkergeschichte. Nur als unbeantwortete, gleichsam noch im Raum der Geschichte stehende Frage ist sie--paradox genug--Hinweis darauf, dass das Licht aufleuchten, dass die Grenze sichtbar werden könnte, dass Gott noch ein anderes Wort hat als das Wort des Gerichtes.<sup>13</sup>

There is an answer to Isaiah's "How long?"; there is a divine "until" ascribing a boundary for the judgment Isaiah was to bring. But this limit for the judgment is radically paradoxical. Yahweh answers,

Until (ʿad ʾašer ʾim) cities lie waste  
without inhabitant,  
and houses without men,  
and the land lies utterly desolate,  
and Yahweh removes the men far away,  
and the forsaken places in the midst of the land are many.  
And if yet a tenth remains in it,  
it again will be for burning,  
like a terebinth and an oak,  
of which, when they are felled,  
only a stump remains.  
A holy seed is its stump (6:11-13).

The "until" of divine judgment reaches until complete destruction. Except for the very last phrase of Yahweh's answer, the only limit set upon the judgment is total annihilation. The use of ʿad ʾašer ʾim instead

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<sup>13</sup>Herntrich, *op. cit.*, p. 114. Cf. Jenni, *op. cit.*, p. 339.

of the more usual cad kî makes it more certain that the condition must first be fulfilled. The idea of utter depopulation is repeated over and again. If there should remain a small remnant, as when a tree is felled and its stump remains, this would ordinarily be the proof of complete destruction (cf. Amos 3:12; 5:3). However, this destruction under the permit of Yahweh's "until" will be so complete that even this tenth, even the stump, will again (ôd) be destroyed by burning.<sup>14</sup> So the judgment is not a sifting judgment, not a purifying judgment. There is no remnant, no survivor. There is no hidden life in the twice-burned stump.

The last phrase comes startlingly: "A holy seed is its stump." This phrase, should it be authentic, would seem to contradict the preceding statement, for it would imply that there would indeed remain life in the stump, to send forth shoots for a new beginning. Therefore the majority of scholars have denied the authenticity of the last phrase.<sup>15</sup> The main basis for dropping this phrase is its apparent omission in the Septuagint. However, Budde has argued that the Septuagint does not actually omit the phrase; rather, this version skips from the fifth last Hebrew word to the

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<sup>14</sup>Cf. Gray, op. cit., p. 111; Wilhelm Gesenius, Philologisch-kritischer und historischer Commentar über den Jesaia (Leipzig: bey Friedr. Christ. Wilh. Vogel, 1821), I, 265; and W. H. Brownlee, "The Text of Isaiah 6:13 in the Light of DSIa," Vetus Testamentum, I (1951), 296-98, who translates 6:13b: "As an oak when it is thrown down, and as the terebinth by the sacred column of a high place"; the Qumran text reads bmh for bm.

<sup>15</sup>E.g., Gray, op. cit., p. 111; Paterson, op. cit., p. 67; Sanders, op. cit., p. 84; Hans Schmidt, Die Grossen Propheten, 2. Abteilung in Die Schriften des Alten Testaments in Auswahl neu übersetzt und für die Gegenwart erklärt (Zweite Auflage; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1923), II, 32; W. Cossmann, Die Entwicklung des Gerichtsgedankens bei den alttestamentlichen Propheten (Giessen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann, 1915), p. 54; and Brownlee, op. cit., pp. 296-98.

last one, overlooking the words in between. Thus Budde considers the phrase authentic.<sup>16</sup> It is true that the Septuagint's rendering, apo tēs thēkēs autēs, is more literally a translation of the last Hebrew word (maṣṣabtâ) than of the fifth last one (maṣṣebet). So it is not at all certain that the Septuagint omits the last phrase. Positive support for this phrase comes from the St. Mark's Isaiah scroll from Qumran, which contains the phrase. It would seem, then, that the last three words of 6:13 are authentic.

Here is a paradox: there will be complete destruction, and yet there will be renewed life. This dialectical tension between death and life was first applied on an individual basis to Isaiah himself (6:5-7), and now the whole people is to become the object of Yahweh's dealing in judgment and in grace. So there is a limit to the divine "until"—not on the human side, but on Yahweh's side.

Das Ziel Gottes ist wohl noch da, aber es wird nur durch das Gericht hindurch, jenseits des Gerichtes, erreicht. Hier müsste eine Besinnung über Gericht und Heil in der prophetischen Verkündigung und in der Geschichte Gottes mit seinem Volk einsetzen, die über Jes. 6 hinausführt. Es liesse sich zeigen, dass auch bei einem Unheilspropheten das Gericht nicht restlos und in jeder Beziehung total sein kann. Schon in Jes. 6 ist die Begrenzung in der gnadenhaften Entsündigung des Propheten zutage getreten. . . . Für das Volk als Ganzes ist aber im jetztigen Moment das Gericht unausweichlich. Der Prophet hat es mit seiner Verkündigung einzuleiten.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Karl Budde, "Über die Schranken, die Jesajas prophetischer Botschaft zu setzen sind," Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, XLI (1923), 166-68.

<sup>17</sup>Jenni, op. cit., p. 339. Scholars who feel that the last three words of 6:13, though added later, represent Isaiah's own mind include Paterson, op. cit., p. 67; Hertrich, op. cit., p. 67; and Th. C. Vriezen, "Essentials of the Theology of Isaiah," Israel's Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg, edited by Bernard W. Anderson and Walter Harrelson (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1962), p. 137.

The hope stated in the last phrase of 6:13 is based solely in the God whose glory now fills the world (6:3). This hope does not imply that a remnant will survive the judgment and rise again of its own power. There will be a holy remnant, to be sure, but it is a remnant recreated out of death by the power of the holy God. "Der Rest entsteht nicht durch Läuterung, sondern durch Sterben."<sup>18</sup>

Thus Isaiah's inaugural vision contains the basic elements of his message to Israel. The ultimate goal of Yahweh's dealings with his people is the filling of the world with his glory. He has a plan for history to reach this goal. This plan was experienced personally by Isaiah, and he was given the commission of bringing the plan about for the people of Israel by his prophetic message. This plan is made up of judgment in all its harshness and grace with all its creative power.

#### The Plan of Yahweh

Some passages in Isaiah speak explicitly about the plan (ēšā) which Yahweh has counseled (yā'as) and which he firmly intends to carry through to completion. The goal of this plan, corresponding to the goal revealed to Isaiah in his vision (6:3), is the exaltation of Yahweh and the filling of the earth with knowledge of him (2:11,17; 5:16; 9:11). His plan is closely connected with his work (5:19). All his dealings with Israel and with all the other nations are directed toward the fulfillment of his plan.

But Israel refuses to recognize Yahweh's plan. They pay no regard

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<sup>18</sup>Herntrich, op. cit., p. XVI.

to his work (5:12), and they mock Isaiah's proclamation of his plan:

Let him make haste,  
let him speed his work (ma'asê),  
that we may see it;  
let the plan (eššâ) of the Holy One of Israel draw near,  
and let it come, that we may know it (5:19).

No doubt Isaiah had been preaching a great deal about the plan of the Holy One of Israel (cf. 30:11), but it was so much nonsense to the people. His proclamation had its commissioned effect: their hearts were hardened.<sup>19</sup> Instead of falling into line with Yahweh's plan, Israel devised her own plan. Yahweh wanted her to quietly trust in his plan, to accept what he would bring in full confidence that his ultimate goal would be reached (7:4; 28:12,16; 30:15).<sup>20</sup> Isaiah himself blindly accepted Yahweh's plan, waiting on the very God who for the moment was hiding his face (8:17). But Israel had other ideas. When Assyria drew near, they devised a plan to seek protection from Egypt--without bothering to find out whether this was in Yahweh's plan:

"Woe to the rebellious children," says Yahweh,  
"who carry out a plan (eššâ), but not mine;  
and who make a league, but not of my spirit,  
that they may add sin to sin;  
who set out to go down to Egypt,  
without asking for my counsel" (30:1-2; cf. 31:1).

And when the Assyrian army stood at their gates, still Israel could only think of desperately repairing her crumbling defenses: "You made a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the old pool. But you

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<sup>19</sup>Johannes Fichtner, "Jahwes Plan in der Botschaft des Jesaja," Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, LXIII (1951), 20, calls ma'asê in this passage "das planvolle Tun Jahwes." See also von Rad, op. cit., p. 172, who feels Isaiah was the first of the prophets to use this idea.

<sup>20</sup>See Carl A. Keller, "Das quietistische Element in der Botschaft des Jesaja," Theologische Zeitschrift, XI (March-April, 1955), 91-93.

did not look to him who did it, or have regard for him who planned it (yōš<sup>e</sup>rāh) long ago" (22:11).

Because Israel refused to trust confidently in Yahweh's plan (8:6), that very plan must turn back against the elected people and make provision for their destruction. Yahweh's work (5:19) becomes his strange work (28:21):

For Yahweh will rise up as on Mount Perazim,  
 he will be angry as in the valley of Gibeon;  
 to do his deed--strange is his deed (zār ma<sup>e</sup>asēhū)!  
 and to do his work--alien is his work (nokrīyyā<sup>e</sup> abōdātō)!

Yahweh carries out his work on the very place of his abode, on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem (10:12), relentlessly carrying out his unbreakable decree to make a full end in the midst of the earth (10:23; 28:22).

Yahweh's plan is placed in the widest possible historical context. Not only Israel is included in his plan, but all the nations. Yahweh confounds the plans of Egypt (19:3), because these plans are not in accord with that which he has planned (yā<sup>a</sup>as) for Egypt (19:12,17). The overthrow of Tyre must come, because this is what Yahweh has planned (yā<sup>a</sup>as) for her (23:8-9). Yahweh's plan had made use of Assyria in his strange work against Israel (5:26ff.; 10:12). But since Assyria had refused to stay in line with his plan, their destruction must also be included:

Yahweh of hosts has sworn:  
 "As I have planned (dimmitî),  
 so shall it be;  
 and as I have purposed (yā<sup>a</sup>astî),  
 so shall it stand:  
 that I will break the Assyrian in my land" (14:24-25; cf. 37:26).

Thus the plan of Yahweh concerns all world history. There is no one who can escape the plan, and there is no one who can annul it. Yahweh is absolutely bent on carrying it through to its ultimate goal:

This is the plan which is planned (hā'ēṣâ hayye'ûṣâ)  
 concerning the whole earth;  
 and this is the hand that is stretched out  
 over all the nations.  
 For Yahweh of hosts has planned,  
 and who will annul it?  
 His hand is stretched out,  
 and who will turn it back? (14:26-27).

The fact that Yahweh's plan includes ultimate destruction of Assyria opens the door for one grim ray of hope for Israel. When their own destruction is complete, God's strange work will turn on their destroyer (10:12). This means that the destruction of Israel is not the final goal of the plan; even though Israel's destruction will be complete, this is not the end of Yahweh's plan. His plan is too wonderful for that. For the one who does wonderfully in counsel (hiplî' 'ēṣâ) will not plow forever and will not thresh forever (28:24-29). His plan includes the recreation of his people, their rebirth under the leadership of the divine child with the name, "A Wonder of a Planner" (9:5).

In this way, through both judgment and grace, Yahweh's plan comes to its goal: the establishment of his glory as the fulness of the earth. "Gericht und Heil sind also zwei Seiten eines und desselben Planes."<sup>21</sup> Yahweh's plan, first revealed to Isaiah in his call vision (6:3), becomes the unifying force behind his prophetic message, and it is taken up again by the great prophet of the exile (Is. 46:10-11; 55:11). It is within the framework of this plan of the holy God that Isaiah can and must utter

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<sup>21</sup>Fichtner, *op. cit.*, p. 32. Cf. Vriezen, "Essentials of the Theology of Isaiah," *op. cit.*, p. 143, who states, "The divine manner of action is wonderful because it involves destruction as well as salvation." Cf. H. W. Hertzberg, "Die prophetische Botschaft vom Heil und die alttestamentliche Theologie," *Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, XLIII (1932), 528.

oracles both of judgment and of grace. For when the holy God deals with sinful men in bringing history to its goal, matters of destruction and rebirth, death and life are involved.

#### Yahweh's Strange Work on Israel

Isaiah, like Amos and Hosea, proclaims the "strange work" (28:21) of Yahweh, his judgment on his people, in all its fierceness. It was his commission, after all, to bring judgment on Israel by causing their hearts to be hardened until their destruction was complete (6:9-13). And the word of judgment itself was part of this powerful, effective message which was to wreak the judgment.

In contrast to Amos and Hosea, Isaiah directed his preaching primarily to the kingdom of Judah. Here also there was a tradition of election, just as there had been in the northern kingdom (cf. Amos 3:2; 5:14). However, in Judah the election of David and his dynasty had become much more prominent in the official cultus and the popular faith than the election which took place in the exodus from Egypt. Yahweh had chosen Zion as his own special dwelling place, he had promised that the Davidic dynasty would endure forever, he had promised protection from all foes and a great kingdom of the future (cf. 2 Sam. 6-7). "Judah's existence, in short, did not rest in obedient response to the gracious acts of Yahweh in the past, but in his unconditional promises for the future."<sup>22</sup> Isaiah had to tell the people the same thing that Amos had told the

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<sup>22</sup>John Bright, A History of Israel (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959), p. 272.

northern kingdom: to be in such a close relationship with Yahweh is a terrible thing. Certainly Yahweh dwelt in the midst of Israel at Zion. However, this God was the Holy One of Israel, a devouring fire (33:14) for a nation that had become utterly sinful. This God would not be obliged to continue to protect a nation that was defying his glorious presence (3:8). This God whose glory filled the whole earth (6:3) did not need Israel in order to maintain his own existence.<sup>23</sup>

Yahweh's work in establishing the Davidic kingdom and protecting it was his proper work. But now his strange work is announced, the destruction of this very same kingdom. This is his "wonderful" work (29:14), for it is beyond the comprehension of the people whose hearts have been hardened. At the very beginning of his book Isaiah shows how the people have perverted their election: "Sons have I reared and brought up, but they rebelled against me" (1:2). Israel, raised to the status of "my people" by Yahweh's marvelous act (1:3b), must become "This people" (6:9) as Yahweh nullifies their election. In this "die ganze Spannung der prophetischen Gerichtsbotschaft enthalten ist; denn das ist die Widernatürlichkeit, dass aus dem 'mein Volk' 'dieses Volk da' geworden ist."<sup>24</sup>

The parable of the vineyard demonstrates this grim side of Israel's election (5:1-7). Isaiah, perhaps using a popular love song, sings about the patient, extravagant care Yahweh had shown for his vineyard--and he got nothing but wild grapes for all his trouble. Yahweh asks the disarming question: "What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have

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<sup>23</sup>Blank, op. cit., pp. 2-3; Gray, op. cit., pp. 110-11.

<sup>24</sup>Hertrich, op. cit., p. 5.

not done for it?" (5:4); and he announces his intention to lay it waste. The meaning of the parable is not left to be guessed:

For the vineyard of Yahweh of hosts  
is the house of Israel,  
and the men of Judah  
are his pleasant planting (5:7).

Precisely because Israel was the object of the divine tender care in the covenant relationship were they also going to be the object of the divine wrath. "Die grosse Umkehrung der heilsgeschichtlichen Front"<sup>25</sup> is seen in passages like 5:26; instead of protecting Israel against other nations, Yahweh will use these nations against his own people. There will be a rerun of the great victory of David over the city of Ariel (29:1), when David made it his own royal city of Zion. But this time Yahweh himself will encamp against "Ariel," reversing election history by laying the city low in sheol (29:2-4). Thus Isaiah turns the popular confidence in Israel's election into a terrifying judgment on them: the holy, glorious God who rises to terrify the earth (2:19) is the God who dwells in their midst. Who can escape from this devouring fire?

In Amos the basic reason for God's judgment had been the people's perversion of their election; in Hosea it was their persistent rejection of Yahweh's tender love that caused his wrath. In Isaiah, the central reason given for God's judgment is the hybris of the people, their trust in their own ability to defend themselves and direct their history. This corresponds in some degree to the popularity of the Davidic tradition in Judah. David had, after all, created a great kingdom through armed conquest. His descendants were still on the throne, and their continuity

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

was assured through the promises of Yahweh constantly repeated in the official cultus. The people tended to have a feeling of security and self-confidence. Thus, when Isaiah exhorted them, in accordance with Yahweh's plan, to disregard their own strength and simply rely quietly and confidently on Yahweh in the political crisis (7:4; 8:13; 30:15), the people thought he was talking political heresy (cf. 8:12).

Isaiah's career extended through a number of political crises, and each time the attitude of the people was one of self-reliance instead of reliance on Yahweh. Early in his career, Isaiah exhorted King Ahaz to abandon his policy of resistance in the face of the Syro-Ephraimic coalition (7:1-9): "Take heed, be quiet, do not fear" (7:4). But Ahaz rebuffed him and made his own provision for Judah's safety by calling for the king of Assyria (2 Kings 16:5-9; Is. 7:12ff.). Some years later, after Hezekiah had taken the throne, Judah was asked to join a revolt against Assyria led by Ashdod and Egypt (714-711 B. C.).<sup>26</sup> Ambassadors from Egypt and Philistia (Is. 18; 14:28-32) tried to persuade King Hezekiah to support the revolt. But Isaiah protested vehemently, going about clad only in a loincloth to show the disastrous results of such reliance (20:2ff.). He counseled the people simply to trust in Yahweh, for he was a sufficient defense:

What will one answer the messengers of the nation?  
 "Yahweh has founded Zion,  
 and in her the afflicted of his people find refuge" (14:32).

Perhaps for the moment Isaiah's voice was heeded, for Judah escaped the

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<sup>26</sup>Bright, *op. cit.*, pp. 252-76, gives a summary of the political events connected with Isaiah's career and relates his oracles to these events.

vengeance wreaked by King Sargon of Assyria. But upon the death of Sargon (705 B. C.) Judah was intricately involved in the rebellion (cf. Is. 30:1-7; 31:1-3). Isaiah denounced this lack of faith in Yahweh bitterly but to no avail. The people were convinced that their "covenant with death" would protect them (28:14ff.), so they scoffed at Isaiah and told him to stop harping on the subject (30:9-11). Their hybris would effect their doom:

Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help  
and rely on horses,  
who trust in chariots because they are many  
and in horsemen because they are very strong,  
but do not look to the Holy One of Israel  
or consult Yahweh (31:1).

This rebellion brought Judah to the brink of doom when Sennacherib invaded in 701 B. C., but still the people continued to rebel against Yahweh (1:2-9). It is probable that 22:1-15 belongs to this period. There is a miraculous deliverance of the city (cf. 38:36-38), and the people respond with tumultuous rejoicing and reveling. This fills the aged prophet with despair, for he sees the people's response as one final example of the deep-rooted hybris which would ultimately bring their destruction. For in the crisis the people had once again looked to their own defenses instead of looking to Yahweh (22:8-11).<sup>27</sup> And their behavior at the miraculous deliverance was the final, unforgivable sin; the nation was doomed:

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<sup>27</sup>Supporting the above interpretation of ch. 22 are Gray, op. cit., pp. 364ff.; Hänel, op. cit., p. 262; Bright, op. cit., p. 276; G. H. Box, The Book of Isaiah (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd., 1908), p. 100; and Edward J. Kissane, The Book of Isaiah: Translated from a Critically Revised Hebrew Text with Commentary (Revised edition; Dublin: Browne & Nolan, Ltd., 1960), I, 232.

In that day Adonai Yahweh of hosts  
 called to weeping and mourning,  
 to baldness and girding with sackcloth;  
 and behold, joy and gladness,  
 slaying oxen and killing sheep,  
 eating flesh and drinking wine.  
 "Let us eat and drink,  
 for tomorrow we die."  
 Yahweh of hosts has revealed himself in my ears:  
 "Surely this iniquity will not be forgiven you  
 until you die,"  
 says Adonai Yahweh of hosts (22:12-14).

Thus it was the root evil of pride in their own ability and a corresponding refusal to trust in Yahweh which was the basis of the judgment which Isaiah had to preach on Israel.<sup>28</sup>

In the light of this basic condition of the people it becomes a little easier to understand the puzzling commission that was given to Isaiah in his inaugural vision, namely, to harden the people's hearts by his proclamation of Yahweh's word (6:9-10). This is the sentence of judgment which corresponds to Israel's guilt; since they insisted on being masters of their own fate, Yahweh will punish them by forcing them to be just that. "They have brought evil upon themselves" (3:9b). For the people of Isaiah's day, it was an appropriate judgment of God which "dem Sünder die Sünde zur Strafe macht."<sup>29</sup>

Isaiah's preaching had its desired effect; the people were turned back into their own sin, unable to turn to Yahweh. A prime example of this is Ahaz. Isaiah speaks Yahweh's word of promise to him, exhorting him to trust in Yahweh's plan for his people (7:4-9). Under a show of

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<sup>28</sup>This conclusion is supported by Kuhl, *op. cit.*, p. 86; and Kissane, *op. cit.*, p. xxxix.

<sup>29</sup>Karl Ludwig Schmidt, "Die Verstockung des Menschen durch Gott," *Theologische Zeitschrift*, I (June, 1945), 16.

piety Ahaz refuses, using a theological maxim to hide his hardness of heart (7:12); "so königlich entschlossen und ebenso orthodox sieht Verstockung aus."<sup>30</sup> The sign which Yahweh gives in spite of Ahaz's unbelief is a double one: God's promise is not changed because of man's unbelief, but the judgment will come in full on those who harden their hearts (7:14ff.). Even God's judgment itself causes hardness of heart. He beats Israel until there is no place left to strike her, and yet the punishment only increases her rebellion (1:5-6). Yahweh's word, sent out against the people in order to cause them to know (yād<sup>e</sup>û), only makes them say guddā<sup>e</sup>û:

The bricks have fallen,  
 but we will build with dressed stones;  
 the sycamores have been cut down (guddā<sup>e</sup>û),  
 but we will put cedars in their place (9:9-10).<sup>31</sup>

Indeed, God's wrath burns the land, with the result that the people become like fuel for the fire, no man sparing his brother (9:17-19). Isaiah preaches Yahweh's word and explains its message, but the priests and the prophets receive it as

precept upon precept, precept upon precept,  
 line upon line, line upon line,  
 here a little, there a little (28:9-10).

Because their hearts were hardened when he spoke Yahweh's word plainly, telling them what rest and repose really were, now Yahweh will speak by men of strange lips and with an alien tongue. Now his word will really

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<sup>30</sup>Hans Walter Wolff, Immanuel--Das Zeichen, dem widersprochen wird: Eine Auslegung von Jesaja 7:1-17 (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1959), pp. 25-26. See also Hertrich, op. cit., pp. 125-26.

<sup>31</sup>Hertrich considers this a play on words; op. cit., p. 179.

be "precept upon precept" for them, "so that they may go, and fall backward, and be broken and snared and taken" (28:11-13). Kissane remarks concerning this passage: "The people have become so spiritually obtuse that the prophet's words are as unintelligible to them as a foreign tongue."<sup>32</sup> Preaching God's word to them is like giving a sealed book to someone who cannot read in the first place; their hardened hearts will not accept it (29:11-12). The interrelation of their sin and God's judgment is seen in 29:9-10:

Stupefy yourselves and be in a stupor,  
 blind yourselves and be blind!  
 Be drunk, but not with wine;  
 stagger, but not with strong drink!  
 For Yahweh has poured out upon you  
 a spirit of deep sleep,  
 and has closed your eyes, the prophets,  
 and covered your heads, the seers.

Israel's sin and God's judgment are tied up in one circle. Yahweh, the rock of salvation for his people (Deut. 32:15), becomes a stone of stumbling for those who are drunk and blind with their own hybris. The judgment is apposite to the sin.

In response to Isaiah's question, "How long?," Yahweh had indicated to him in his call vision that this judgment of hardening would continue until Israel was completely destroyed physically (Is. 6:11-13). Thus the judgment of hardened hearts would inevitably bring with it total destruction for the nation. As the agent of this destruction, Isaiah indicates, Yahweh will make use of the powerful nation of Assyria (7:17-20; 8:7-8; 10:5-6; cf. 5:26-30; 10:28-34; 28:1-4; 29:5). Many of the descriptions

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<sup>32</sup>Op. cit., p. 306.

of the disaster go beyond mere war, however, as Isaiah makes use, as Amos had done, of material from the idea of the day of Yahweh (yôm yhw). And again, as in Amos, the total force of the day of Yahweh is turned against Yahweh's own people (2:6-22; 3:18ff.; 5:26-30; 22:5-8).<sup>33</sup> But in all this it is clear that Yahweh himself is the one who has turned against Israel in judgment. The oracle in 9:7-10:4 (and 5:24-25) says that Yahweh has sent his word<sup>34</sup> against Israel, bringing judgment and destruction. For each of the five stanzas the refrain is the same:

For all this his anger is not turned away  
and his hand is stretched out still.

Even when nothing remains but to fall among the slain (10:4) the "until" of divine judgment has not yet been reached and the terrible hand is still stretched out. The judgment is total, Israel is finished.

#### The Judgment as a Means of Salvation

In spite of the totality of the judgment which Isaiah preached, there is a family of ideas in his message which, scholars have held, shows that he did not conceive of a total destruction for Israel. Rather, he felt that the punishment would bring salvation to a purified remnant which would survive the judgment. There are three interrelated ideas

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<sup>33</sup>On the day of Yahweh in Isaiah see Gerhard von Rad, "The Origin of the Concept of the Day of Yahweh," *Journal of Semitic Studies*, IV (April, 1959), 98ff.; Ladislav Černý, *The Day of Yahweh and Some Relevant Problems* (V. Praze: Nakladem Filosofické Faculty University Karlovy, 1948), *passim*; Kissane, *op. cit.*, p. xli; Gray, *op. cit.*, pp. lxxxviii, 364; Hertrich, *op. cit.*, pp. 91, 184.

<sup>34</sup>The Septuagint reads thanatos in 9:7, apparently from the Hebrew deber instead of dābār; Kissane, *op. cit.*, p. lll, accepts this reading.

here: the conception of punishment as a purifying discipline, the survival of a remnant of the people, and the so-called doctrine of the inviolability of Zion. Thus, in effect, there would be a bridge between punishment and salvation for Israel. These ideas must be examined to determine what the relationship between judgment and grace really is in Isaiah's message.

Some scholars find evidence in Isaiah that the judgment which Isaiah preaches will have a salutary effect on Israel in that it will discipline and purify the sinful nation. Because of his promises, Yahweh cannot completely destroy his people; yet his righteousness demands that he punish them and thus sanctify them. Driver, for example, says,

The chosen nation is imperishable; but the divine justice requires that its unworthy members should be swept away: the rest, purged and renovated, will then form the foundation of a new community, exhibiting the ideal character of the people.<sup>35</sup>

According to this view, the judgment actually accomplishes the salvation of the people. For the judgment not only destroys that element of the people which is sinful and causing the downfall of the nation (Ausmerzungsgericht), but it is also a disciplinary punishment which leads to an inner purification of those people who are worthy to survive (Erziehungsgericht and Läuterungsgericht). The net result is that the judgment creates a remnant of the people who are faithful to Yahweh (Sichtungsgericht) and makes it possible for the era of salvation to begin. Thus the judgment

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<sup>35</sup>S. R. Driver, Isaiah: His Life and Times, and the Writings Which Bear His Name (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d.), p. 110. Cf. also Kissane, op. cit., p. xxxviii; Eduard König, Das Buch Jesaja (Gütersloh: Verlag von C. Bertelsmann, 1926), p. 170; Gustav Hölscher, "Jesaja," Theologische Literaturzeitung, LXXVII (November, 1952), 691; and Bright, op. cit., pp. 279-81.

means destruction for the sinful majority and salvation for the pious minority.<sup>36</sup>

This view necessarily supposes that the people of Israel could be divided into two groups, the sinful and the pious. On the one hand, there was the great mass of the people for whom there was no hope of repentance, and whom Isaiah appointed for destruction: "Ihm ist die Nation ein Konglomerat mannigfacher Bestandteile, von denen manche einer Besserung kaum fähig sind."<sup>37</sup> But there were also, on the other hand, the pious individuals who hearkened to Isaiah's warnings and who would be spared and purified in the judgment; this pious remnant would form the nucleus for a new people of Israel. In this understanding of Isaiah's message the tension between judgment and salvation is dissolved. The judgment leads to salvation by destroying that element of Israel which was hindering the arrival of salvation, and at the same time it refines those who were already pious so that they might be a holy remnant. The apparent contradiction between this type of purifying judgment and the total destruction proclaimed with such fierceness by Isaiah does not bother the scholars who hold that Isaiah preached judgment as a purifying discipline. They overcome the difficulty either by positing different periods in Isaiah's career during which he took differing views about the coming judgment, or by ascribing the oracles which imply total destruction to prophetic extravagance. Likewise, the apparent contradiction

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<sup>36</sup>Martin Buber, The Prophetic Faith, translated from the Hebrew by Carlyle Witton-Davies (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), p. 133, says, "It is selection by removing, revival by selection, hallowing by revival." Cf. Cossmann, op. cit., pp. 66-67, 174; Mötscher, op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>37</sup>Cossmann, op. cit., p. 173.

between this purifying judgment in which only a small remnant survives and the messianic passages in Isaiah which imply a glorious future for the whole nation is explained either by deleting the messianic passages or by supposing that the small remnant once again grows into a full nation. But is this conception of the judgment actually part of Isaiah's theology? To determine this, the individual passages which are used to support the idea of a purifying judgment must be examined.

The oracle in 1:21-28 is the basic support for the contention that Isaiah looked for a purifying judgment. The indictment is given in 1:21-23: the faithful city has become a harlot and her silver has become dross. The "therefore" of judgment follows:

Therefore the oracle of Adonai Yahweh of hosts,  
 the Mighty One of Israel:  
 "Ah, I will vent my wrath on my enemies,  
 and I will avenge myself on my foes.  
 I will turn my hand against you,  
 and I will smelt away your dross as with lye,  
 and I will remove all your alloy.  
 And I will restore your judges as at the first,  
 and your counselors as at the beginning.  
 Afterward thus you shall be called: 'the city of righteousness,'  
 'the faithful city.'"

Here is both judgment and grace: Yahweh's wrath and punishment come because of Israel's sin, but his grace also comes and restores the people. Most scholars agree that it is the purifying judgment which provides the bridge between Yahweh's wrath and the restoration of the people. Kissane says, "The whole nation will undergo a chastisement of purification; when the process is complete, the purified remnant (silver) will have survived, the wicked (dross) will have perished."<sup>38</sup> The political crisis

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<sup>38</sup>Kissane, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

of the moment was part of God's plan as he was leading history to its goal, according to Bright; "He [Isaiah] therefore viewed the present tragedy as part of that purpose: a discipline, a purge by which Yahweh would remove the dross in the national character, leaving a chastened and purified people."<sup>39</sup>

It is questionable, however, whether this oracle really speaks of a purifying judgment which destroys the sinners or sinfulness of the people and thus leaves a pure residue. The indictment against the people does not imply that only a part of the people had become sinful or that there was still some good left in the people. Justice and righteousness, the two prime characteristics of a people who have the holy God in their midst, are no longer to be found in this people. "Everyone" (kullô) is involved in sinful pursuits. The problem is not that there is some dross amid the silver, but "your silver has become dross" (1:22a). There is no silver left to be purified, there is only dross. In the light of this indictment, the "therefore" of divine judgment becomes terrifying. Yahweh turns against his people in all his fury; 1:24 has the largest heaping of divine names in Isaiah: "Adonai Yahweh of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel." The people of Israel have now become Yahweh's enemies, on whom he will avenge himself. He who once led Israel out from Egypt with an

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<sup>39</sup>Op. cit., p. 275; others who view 1:24-26 as a purifying judgment include Gray, op. cit., p. xciii; Budde, op. cit., p. 160; Herbert Dittmann, "Der heilige Rest im Alten Testament," Theologische Studien und Kritiken, LXXXVII (1914), 613; Otto Kaiser, Der Prophet Jesaja: Kapitel 1-12, in Das Alte Testament Deutsch, edited by Artur Weiser (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), XVII, 15; Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 105; and Driver, op. cit., pp. 21-22, who speaks of "the survival of a worthy residue alone."

outstretched hand will now turn that hand against them. Since the people have become dross, there can hardly be a purifying judgment implied in the words, "I will smelt away (ḡesrōp) your dross as with lye." God's holiness is a consuming fire (33:14) which burns against all that is opposed to his holiness; Israel is dross and must therefore be destroyed.

Then, in the midst of the judgment, Yahweh's grace comes and recreates the people. A restoration is described in 1:26, brought about not by any purified remnant but by Yahweh's gracious purpose which even Israel's dross cannot thwart: "And I will restore (wəḡāšîbâ) . . . ." Israel will be restored by Yahweh to her first state when she had judges and counselors who hearkened to Yahweh's will; then the attributes of righteousness and faithfulness will be applicable to her.<sup>40</sup> She who was without justice and righteousness (1:21) will be redeemed by God's own justice and righteousness (1:27). When God's mišpāt and səḡdāqâ come into play, man in his sinfulness is brought low (5:15-16). Yet God in his mišpāt and səḡdāqâ recreates man out of his destruction and becomes his people's redeemer (1:27); now mišpāt and səḡdāqâ become Israel's chief characteristics (33:5; 32:15-16). Indeed, the full reign of justice and righteousness will signal the arrival of the messianic age (9:6; 11:3-5; 32:1). Except for his mention of survivors, Delitzsch rightly states:

Whilst, therefore, God was revealing Himself in His punitive righteousness; He was working out a righteousness which would be bestowed as a gift of grace upon those who escaped the former. The notion of "righteousness" is now following a New Testament track. In front it has the fire of the law; behind, the love of the gospel.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Herntrich, op. cit., pp. 21-22, supports this view of 1:21-26.

<sup>41</sup>Op. cit., p. 107.

That God's justice and righteousness still means judgment over sin is shown in 1:28. The tension remains; judgment and grace stand side by side in the prophetic word as Isaiah calls the people to decision. The verdict of "sinful" stands over the entire people; there is no hidden silver to be purified, but only dross to be smelted away.

Aber Gott verkündigt durch das prophetische Wort diesem Volk, das im Tode ist und den Tod verdient hat, gleichwohl das kommende Heil. Dass er aber dieses Heil schaffen wird durch sein Gericht, bedeutet für die Sünder, die sich weigern, das Wort zu hören, den Tod; denn das prophetische Wort verkündigt nicht nur das kommende Gericht und Heil, sondern weil es in der Vollmacht Gottes geschieht, wirkt das prophetische Wort selbst Gericht und Heil (55:10-11).<sup>42</sup>

The above interpretation of 1:21-26 is supported by 1:18, which is a related oracle. Here God speaks in earnest, pointing to his power to forgive in spite of man's rebellion. "Der Vergleich von v. 18 betont noch einmal die Grösse der Schuld, um die Gnade Gottes noch grösser und begehrenswerter erscheinen zu lassen."<sup>43</sup> On man's side there is nothing but sin; but God's grace overcomes the sin and changes it into its opposite. There is no purified residue here; there is destruction and rebirth.

Another oracle which speaks of a purification of Israel is 4:2-6. This oracle paints the future messianic age, with the branch of Yahweh and the survivors of Israel enjoying a time of salvation. It is stated

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<sup>42</sup>Hertrich, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>43</sup>Kaiser, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13; cf. also Hertrich, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-18; L. G. Rignell, "Isaiah Chapter One," *Studia Theologica*, XI (1957), 152. Other interpretations of 1:18 have been advanced; e.g., Karl Budde, "Zu Jesaja 1-5," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, XLIX (1931), 30, takes it as conditional; and Box, *op. cit.*, p. 25, understands it as a sarcastic threat.

that this glorious age will come about "when Yahweh shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning" (4:4). This indeed sounds like a remnant surviving the judgment, purified and sanctified by the judgment.<sup>44</sup> However, once again everything comes from God's side; the "remnant" in Zion is holy because he has made them holy and recorded them for life. This is not a continuation of the earthly Israel, for God destroyed the filth and bloodstains of Israel with a spirit of judgment (mišpāt) and a spirit of burning (bā'ēr). Already in his call vision Isaiah understood that even the last tenth of Israel was to pass through this judgment of burning (6:13). The only continuity between Israel and the kingdom of the messiah is the judgment itself, for the destruction of Israel is the setting up of God's mišpāt: "Gottes Gericht ist seine Gnade."<sup>45</sup> Gesenius saw that 4:2-6 does not speak of a purifying judgment,

aber bey dem Propheten herrscht die höhere Idee einer Nemesis, nach welcher die Schuld des Volkes gesühnt werden muss, durch den Untergang derer, die sie auf das Vaterland geladen, und dass erst dann sich Jehova's Liebe und Segen dem Volke von Neuem zuwenden könne.<sup>46</sup>

The significant word bārā' ("create") is used in 4:5, indicating that this messianic age will indeed be a new creation of Yahweh, complete with

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<sup>44</sup>So Driver, op. cit., p. 26; Hans Schmidt, op. cit., p. 112; Budde, "Zu Jesaja 1-5," op. cit., pp. 38ff. However, this passage is considered too messianic and therefore exilic by Gray, op. cit., p. 77; and Kaiser, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>45</sup>Hertrich, op. cit., p. 70.

<sup>46</sup>Op. cit., p. 222.

the cloud and fire of the exodus. The burning fire of Yahweh's holiness destroys and brings to life.

The oracle in 8:21-22 is used by some scholars to show that Israel is purified through her discipline and turns back to Yahweh.<sup>47</sup> However, the passage is very obscure. It seems to show not the purification of Israel but her complete degradation; thus the oracle provides the gloom which stands in such contrast with the light introduced in 9:1ff. The parable of the farmer (28:23-29) is also adduced by scholars to show that Isaiah expected a purifying judgment: a farmer does not plow continually, but when he has opened his ground he plants his seed.<sup>48</sup> This oracle certainly shows that Isaiah had hope for the future; but the major import of the illustration seems to be merely that Yahweh works both in judgment and in grace. The idea of a purifying judgment is hardly expressed here.

Far from expecting a purifying judgment, it is evident that Isaiah was well aware that no judgment short of total destruction would cause Israel to turn to Yahweh. As a prophet of God he preaches the word of judgment in order to force the people to a decision, with the way to repentance always open. But the people consistently refused to understand God's judgment as disciplinary. When his dynamic word caused the bricks to fall, they saw the judgment merely as a temporary setback and resolved to build with dressed stones (9:9). When Yahweh's wrath burned the land,

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<sup>47</sup>Thus Kissane, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-66; and L. G. Rignell, "Das Orakel 'Mahersalal Has-bas' Jesaja 8," *Studia Theologica*, X (1956), 49-50.

<sup>48</sup>Kissane, *op. cit.*, pp. 308ff.; Kuhl, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

the people were not refined but instead burned against one another (9:18). The verdict must be: "The people did not turn to him who smote them" (9:12).<sup>49</sup>

At the close of Isaiah's career, after so many years of calling the people to repentance, it was still evident that no judgment would purify Israel. Yahweh brought the armies of Assyria to the very gates of Jerusalem in his judgment on Israel, but the people were not purified. When the siege was miraculously lifted, there was no weeping and mourning, but only a carpe diem type of revelry (22:12-13). Although Jerusalem itself was spared from destruction at this time, the aged prophet could only weep bitter tears "for the destruction of the daughter of my people" (22:4). For he heard the awful sentence of Yahweh of hosts, "Surely this iniquity will not be forgiven you until (ad) you die" (22:14). The "until" of divine judgment at the end of Isaiah's career corresponds exactly to the "until" (ad) of divine judgment at the beginning of his career in his inaugural vision (6:11): the limit set on the judgment is not the destruction of all but a purified minority, but it is total destruction. Even when all human life is extinguished and the only "remnant" is the pile of corpses in the middle of the street, still the anger of Yahweh burns and his terrible hand is stretched out (5:25; 10:4). There is no "until" from the human side--and yet there remains an "until" from God's side. For Isaiah is convinced that Yahweh will step in with his word of grace and recreate his people--not just the pious individuals who were particularly suited to refining, but the very people "who walked

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<sup>49</sup>On this point see Hertrich, op. cit., pp. 181, 89.

in darkness" (8:23ff.). Even though Bright thinks Isaiah looked for a purifying judgment, he recognizes that the present Israel had to be destroyed; but Isaiah could still hope: "nor could the tragedy extinguish hope--for Isaiah had placed hope precisely beyond a tragic judgment, itself part of Yahweh's plan."<sup>50</sup> Thus it is in Yahweh's full judgment, not in any ninety per cent judgment which leaves a purified residue, that Isaiah can base his hope for a messianic future. As Hertrich points out:

Gerade in der radikalen Ausrichtung des Gerichtswortes bleibt es eine offene Frage, wie das Wirklichkeit werden wird. Darin ist dieses Wort Christuszeugnis, dass es all eigenen Wege der Menschen in ihrer Nichtigkeit entlarvt. Es gibt keinen menschlichen Weg, keinen frommen oder unfrommen Weg, der in eigener Kraft zu Gott beschritten werden könnte. . . . das Evangelium bringt die Antwort, indem es verkündet, wie das Gericht die Gnade wirklich macht.<sup>51</sup>

Closely related to the idea of a purifying judgment is the concept of the remnant. There can be no doubt that Isaiah did indeed speak of a remnant of Israel which would somehow be involved in the future messianic age (4:2-3; 10:20; 11:11,16; 37:30-32). But in what sense does he speak of a remnant? Many scholars hold that Isaiah thought the remnant would be those individuals in Israel who would literally survive the coming judgment and from whom a new, holy nation would spring. Thus de Vaux says,

Le châtement qu'annoncent les Prophètes est rarement si total qu'il ne fasse la part de la miséricorde divine, ni l'horizon qu'ils découvrent, si obstinément noir, qu'on n'y puisse voir poindre l'aube du salut. C'est un des thèmes de leur prédication que la vengeance de Dieu envers Israël coupable épargnera un

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<sup>50</sup>Op. cit., pp. 279-81, 90-91.

<sup>51</sup>Op. cit., p. 186.

Reste, et que ce Reste, purifié par l'épreuve et sanctifié par une nouvelle alliance, deviendra bénéficiaire des promesses messianiques.<sup>52</sup>

This remnant arises either out of the purifying process of the judgment, as de Vaux holds, or it is spared by Yahweh's grace because he needs a nation to fulfill his plan for history. T. H. Robinson supports the latter view; there is punishment for the people as a whole, but

there would also be those who should survive and form the nucleus of a really holy nation. . . . He [Yahweh] needed in Isaiah's day a nation for His own self-expression, and though He might vindicate His character on that very nation, He would yet have to restore her in order to exhibit also His own righteousness and moral holiness to the world.<sup>53</sup>

Since, in either view, a portion of the nation of Israel survives the judgment and goes on to experience the messianic age, the tension between judgment and grace is resolved by the idea of the remnant. Indeed, Paterson says precisely that:

Isaiah inherited the thought of Amos and he resolved the tension by his thought of the Remnant whereby the divine righteousness is vindicated upon the nation, but grace reigns through the survival of a remnant, a holy seed, and the promises and purpose of God to the world remain unbroken.<sup>54</sup>

According to de Vaux, the idea of the remnant provides the bridge between judgment and grace:

Le Reste est toujours présenté comme une marque de la miséricorde de Dieu. . . . Des l'origine et jusqu'a la fin, le Reste est

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<sup>52</sup>R. de Vaux, "Le 'reste d'Israël' d'après les prophètes," Revue Biblique, XLII (1933), 526. Cf. also Joh. Lindblom, "Gibt es eine Eschatologie bei den alttestamentlichen Propheten?," Studia Theologica, VI (1952), 102; Box, op. cit., p. 15; J. Philip Hyatt, Prophetic Religion (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1947), p. 103.

<sup>53</sup>Theodore H. Robinson, Prophecy and the Prophets in Ancient Israel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, n.d.), p. 101.

<sup>54</sup>Op. cit., p. 36. Cf. Dittmann, op. cit., pp. 607-08.

comme le pont qui relie la menace du châtime<sup>nt</sup> à la promesse de restauration.<sup>55</sup>

The passages in Isaiah which speak of a remnant must be examined in order to determine whether this view of the remnant is a true representation of Isaiah's theology.

As in Amos (cf. Amos 3:12; 5:3), the idea of a remnant is often used in Isaiah as a witness to the thoroughness of the destruction. In Isaiah's call vision, the fact that there was to be total destruction did not preclude the possibility that a tenth might be left over; but even this lamentable attestation of the fierceness of the judgment was to be burned again (6:11-13).<sup>56</sup> The twice-burned stump is proof that the nation is dead.

Isaiah applies the idea of a remnant to the destruction of Israel's enemies. When Yahweh punishes the arrogant boasting of the king of Assyria, the light of Israel will become a fire and consume the "forest" of Assyria. There will be a remnant left, but it will only serve as evidence of Assyria's destruction: "The remnant of the trees of his forest will be so few that a child can write them down" (10:17-19). The pitifully few trees left stand in marked contrast with the former glorious forest; the "remnant" is simply a witness to the totality of the

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<sup>55</sup>Op. cit., p. 538. Cf. also J. Wellhausen, Prolegomena to the History of Israel (New York: The Meridian Library, 1957), p. 482, who states: "For him, in contrast with Amos, the great crisis had a positive character; in contrast to Hosea, he did not expect a temporary suspension of the theocracy, to be followed by its complete reconstruction, but in the pious and God-fearing individuals who were still to be met with in this Sodom of iniquity, he saw the threads, thin indeed yet sufficient, which formed the links between the Israel of the present and its better future."

<sup>56</sup>On this passage see supra, pp. 108ff.

judgment.<sup>57</sup> In the destruction of Moab, likewise, there will be survivors, but "those who survive will be very few and feeble" (16:14). When Yahweh gives the signal for the destruction of the dreaded nation (apparently Assyria), there will be a remnant left: "They shall all of them be left to the birds of prey of the mountains and to the beasts of the earth" (18:6).

Even when the "remnant" idea is applied to Israel, often it carries the same connotation of complete destruction. The glory of the Israelites will become like the remnant of Syria after Damascus has been destroyed (17:3). In that day the glory of Jacob will be comparable to the residue left by the reaper when he harvests the crop (17:4-6):

Gleanings will be left in it,  
as when an olive tree is beaten--  
two or three berries  
in the top of the highest bough,  
four or five  
on the branches of a fruit tree.

Two or three berries left at the top of the tree, beyond the reach of the gatherer, only serve as a reminder that the berries have indeed been gathered. Or again, the destruction about to come upon Israel is like a high wall with a break in it, bulging out and about to collapse (30:13). When the wall falls it is like a potter's vessel which is smashed ruthlessly. There are remnants; many sherds are scattered about. But "among its fragments not a sherd is found with which to take fire from the hearth or to dip up water out of the cistern" (30:14). The "remnant" of the

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<sup>57</sup>Kissane, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-34, thinks 10:17-19 refers to the destruction of Israel, with the survival of a remnant. However, the context indicates that the total destruction of Assyria is meant.

wall or of the vessel is merely a witness to the complete destruction.

Even in the military defeat which is about to come upon Israel there will be a remnant left for Israel:

A thousand will flee at the threat of one,  
 at the threat of five you shall flee,  
 until you are left  
 like a flagstaff on the top of a mountain,  
 like a signal on a hill (30:17).

Here again the whole import of the "remnant" is on the thoroughness of the destruction. Thus it is seen that Isaiah's use of the concept of the remnant includes a strong emphasis on the intense destruction which this concept, in a negative way, provides.

Yet there is another side to Isaiah's use of the remnant idea. In some passages the concept of the remnant becomes dialectical, containing the tension between judgment and grace within itself. Thus in 1:8-9 the remnant that is left in Sennacherib's invasion amounts to no more than a booth in a vineyard; the "remnant" witnesses to the completeness of the destruction of the land. Yet at the same time the remnant is seen as a witness to the grace of Yahweh:

If Yahweh of hosts  
 had not left us a few survivors,  
 we should have been like Sodom,  
 and become like Gomorrah (1:9).

This passage is certainly loaded with judgment, but it also takes note of God's grace; "es verkündet Gott als den Feind des Volkes, der aber in seinem Gericht doch der Herr der Verheissung bleibt."<sup>58</sup> It is into this two-sided concept of the remnant that Isaiah himself, his disciples, and

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<sup>58</sup>Hertrich, op. cit., p. 10.

the children to whom he gave symbolic names belong. They are all living witnesses both to the judgment and to the grace implied in the concept of the remnant.

Isaiah's first son was named še'ār yāšûb (7:3). Some scholars feel the name should be translated "A Remnant Shall Repent."<sup>59</sup> This is possible grammatically, but it is quite unlikely in view of Isaiah's conviction that the people could not repent. The name was no doubt understood against the background of the military actions currently of such great interest in Jerusalem. Thus it should be translated, "A Remnant Shall Return." But the name is ambiguous--and designedly so. For it was intended as a call to a decision; Ahaz had this visible word of judgment and grace before his eyes as Isaiah counseled him to put full confidence in Yahweh. Ahaz knew well that a "remnant" of his army returning home could only mean overwhelming defeat; but at the same time the promise was there: a return would take place. It was not a promise of cheap assurance, for it meant the working out of Yahweh's plan--and that included judgment along with salvation. The name was both "Only A Remnant Shall Return" and "A Remnant Shall Return."<sup>60</sup> Thus both God's word of judgment

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<sup>59</sup>Nathaniel Micklem, Prophecy and Eschatology (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1926), pp. 145-46; and H. H. Rowley, The Biblical Doctrine of Election (London: Lutterworth Press, 1950), p. 74.

<sup>60</sup>Cf. Hertrich, op. cit., pp. 117-21; Buber, op. cit., p. 134; Wolff, op. cit., pp. 14-15; Hans Walter Wolff, "Das Thema 'Umkehr' in der alttestamentlichen Prophetie," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, XLVIII (1951), 138; Kissane, op. cit., p. 98; Gray, op. cit., pp. xci, 116; Hölischer, op. cit., p. 688; Cossmann, op. cit., p. 54. However, Blank, op. cit., pp. 32-33, thinks Isaiah meant only a threat by this name, but a later "Isaiah of legend" adopted the boy and made it a promise. Bright, op. cit., p. 274, feels Isaiah first meant only doom by the name but later added hopeful connotations (10:20f.).

and his word of grace were proclaimed in the appearance of this child, calling for submission to his judgment and faith in his promise.

The name of Isaiah's second son carries a similar double meaning. The name mahēr šālāl ḥāš baz (8:3) can be translated, "The Spoil Hastens, The Plunder Comes Quickly." This living word meant first of all a promise, for the explanation given is that Damascus and Samaria, who were attacking Jerusalem, would soon be destroyed. However, the name also contained a sinister element: when the people rejected "the gentle waters of Shiloah" and refused to put confidence in Yahweh, the name would become a word of judgment also for Judah (8:5-8).

Isaiah considered himself and his children to be signs and portents in Israel (8:18), and he also gathered a group of disciples around himself (8:16). Here, in Isaiah's family and circle of disciples, was a visible witness to the remnant with its double meaning of judgment and grace. The existence of this group was a judgment on all the people who refused to heed Isaiah's preaching. But at the same time the group existed in a "representative capacity"<sup>61</sup> for the whole people of Israel, showing that God's grace would still become effective for them. Most scholars consider Isaiah and his circle of disciples to be the remnant itself, the new Israel in nuce.<sup>62</sup> However, it seems rather that Isaiah

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<sup>61</sup>J. C. Campbell, "God's People and the Remnant," Scottish Journal of Theology, III (1950), 80.

<sup>62</sup>So Hölscher, op. cit., p. 689; Dittmann, op. cit., p. 612; Emil Balla, Die Botschaft der Propheten, edited by Georg Fohrer (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1958), p. 138; Adolphe Lods, The Prophets and the Rise of Judaism, translated by S. H. Hooke (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1955), p. 102; Hyatt, op. cit., p. 103.

and his family and disciples were not the remnant itself but only witnesses to it. They were signs and portents for Israel, they were still waiting and hoping on the God who was hiding his face (8:16-18). Yet it is true that here there is a certain Zusammenballung der Zeit; in the lives and experiences of this group of believers there was both the experience of the judgment of God on the sinful nation (6:5) and a foretaste of the world which was to be through God's new creation.<sup>63</sup>

The sign of the Immanuel child (7:10ff.) also displays the tension between judgment and grace. The child himself is a symbol of the remnant (cf. 8:9-10) and shows the two-sided character of the idea of the remnant. This oracle is one of the most debated passages in the Old Testament.<sup>64</sup> The identity of the woman (and so also the child) in 7:14 is uncertain. Many suggestions have been offered; scholars have argued that the woman was Ahaz's wife and the child was Hezekiah,<sup>65</sup> or that she was Isaiah's own wife,<sup>66</sup> or that she was any woman nearby who happened to be pregnant.<sup>67</sup> It should be noted that the description of this woman is

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<sup>63</sup>Cf. Campbell, op. cit., pp. 80-82; Micklem, op. cit., p. 175; Hertrich, op. cit., pp. 136, 153-55; Budde, "Über die Schranken, die Jesajas prophetischer Botschaft zu setzen wird," op. cit., p. 174.

<sup>64</sup>For a convenient review of the major interpretations see Wolff, Immanuel—Das Zeichen, dem widersprochen wird: Eine Auslegung von Jesaja 7:1-17, passim.

<sup>65</sup>Buber, op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>66</sup>Johs. Pedersen, Israel: Its Life and Culture (Copenhagen: Branner Og Korch, 1940), III-IV, 555; Kuhl, op. cit., p. 78; Gesenius, op. cit., p. 301; Micklem, op. cit., p. 151.

<sup>67</sup>Gray, op. cit., pp. 124ff., who says, "Mothers will express the general feeling of relief at the favourable turn in public events (cf. 1 Sam. 4:21) when they name their children."

strangely vague and probably intentionally so. Delitzsch remarks that if Isaiah were referring to his own wife, "he could hardly have expressed himself in a more ambiguous and unintelligible manner."<sup>68</sup> For this reason it seems that the main accent of the sign lies on the name Immanuel, "God with us."

The next verse (7:15) is also ambiguous. The curds and honey which the Immanuel child will eat when he is old enough to refuse the evil and choose the good could be a symbol for the poverty and nomadic conditions brought on by war,<sup>69</sup> or for the choice products of the land of promise,<sup>70</sup> or even for the food of the nomadic paradise.<sup>71</sup> Thus the whole oracle about the Immanuel child appears to be "designedly enigmatic."<sup>72</sup> This corresponds to its two-sided character: it is at one time both a sign of grace and a sign of judgment. The object of the sign is to confirm the promise made in 7:4ff., namely that the city would be delivered from the attack of Damascus and Samaria (cf. 7:16). But at the same time the sign is a word of judgment in that it works only a hardening of the heart in Ahaz, which must result in destruction for him (7:17). For those who rely

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<sup>68</sup>Op. cit., pp. 217ff. Cf. also Wolff, Immanuel--Das Zeichen, dem widersprochen wird: Eine Auslegung von Jesaja 7:1-17, pp. 33-35.

<sup>69</sup>Kissane, op. cit., pp. 86-87; Gesenius, op. cit., p. 305; and Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 221.

<sup>70</sup>Gray, op. cit., pp. 124ff.

<sup>71</sup>Wolff, Immanuel--Das Zeichen, dem widersprochen wird: Eine Auslegung von Jesaja 7:1-17, p. 39; Hertrich, op. cit., p. 131; Pedersen, op. cit., p. 555; and Budde, "Über die Schranken, die Jesajas prophetischer Botschaft zu setzen wird," op. cit., p. 170.

<sup>72</sup>Lods, op. cit., p. 104.

on Yahweh (Isaiah and his followers, cf. 8:16-18) it is a sign of coming salvation; but for those whose hearts are hardened, it is a sign of coming privation and destruction.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, the name of the Immanuel child could really be spoken only by those who trusted in Yahweh; thus this child himself was a symbol of the remnant.<sup>74</sup> As such he was a witness to both God's judgment and his grace.

Thus far two aspects of Isaiah's use of the concept of the remnant have been examined. He uses the concept as a witness to the totality of the destruction, and he also uses it to demonstrate the dialectic of Yahweh's activity in both judgment and grace. He uses the concept in yet a third way: the "remnant" is the term applied to the new people of God in the era of salvation (10:20; 11:11,16; 37:30-32). But even this usage of the idea of the remnant does not provide for a lessening of the tension between the destruction of Israel in the judgment and the salvation of Israel in Yahweh's grace. The fact that Isaiah speaks of a glorious future for the "remnant" does not negate what he has said about the total destruction of Israel. For the remnant of the messianic age will come into existence by the grace of God; it will be a new creation, not a group of purified survivors. The death of the nation must occur before the recreation of the remnant will take place.

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<sup>73</sup>Cf. Hertrich, *op. cit.*, pp. 126, 131; Kissane, *op. cit.*, p. 85. Blank, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-29, explains the seemingly contradictory elements of judgment and grace in this sign by supposing it was originally delivered by the "historic Isaiah" but was later taken up by the "Isaiah of legend," who turned the original threat into a promise.

<sup>74</sup>Cf. Rignell, "Das Orakel 'Mahersalal Has-bas' Jesaja 8," *op. cit.*, p. 44; Buber, *op. cit.*, p. 140; Kissane, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

Isaiah's call vision already revealed to him that total destruction had to precede the revival of the remnant in the era of salvation. The last tenth of Israel was to be destroyed; even the stump that was left standing when the tree was cut down was to be destroyed by burning. There is no life left in the stump; even the remnant is dead. But at just this point Yahweh steps in and recreates a holy seed in the stump (6:13). This shoot issues forth and ushers in the messianic age (11:1ff.). Here it becomes clear that the concept of the remnant is finally an eschatological concept; it merges with Isaiah's hope of the messianic age. It presupposes a total judgment, and it implies a total salvation. In 10:20-23 the phrase "in that day" points to an eschatological fulfillment, when the name še'ār yāšûb will become a reality in both its implications of judgment and grace. For destruction is decreed and Yahweh will make a full end (10:22-23); yet there will be a remnant, recreated by Yahweh's grace, supported by the mighty God (10:20-21). Hertrich says,

Gottes Gericht ist die andere Seite seiner Verheissung. . . .  
 Dass das Gericht gewiss geschieht, ist zugleich--so merkwürdig  
 das erscheinen mag--die Bestätigung dafür, dass die Verheissung  
 gewiss eintreffen wird.<sup>75</sup>

Other passages speaking of the future remnant also show this juxtaposition of full judgment and full salvation. Yahweh, who kept his hand stretched out in judgment until no one remained to record its withdrawal (9:7-10:4), will, when the root of Jesse is revived, stretch out his hand a second time (yôšîp šēnît yādô) to recover the remnant (še'ār) of his people (11:10-11). The new mighty act of salvation will be exactly parallel to

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<sup>75</sup>Op. cit., p. 200.

the exodus from Egypt (11:15-16). The remnant of Judah whose root was cut off through the destruction shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward: "The zeal of Yahweh of hosts will accomplish this" (37:31-32; cf. 9:6). In the day when the branch of Yahweh is beautiful and glorious, then Yahweh will create the remnant and make it holy, after the judgment and burning have run their course (4:2-6). "Das Wort vom Rest bringt geradezu klassisch zum Ausdruck, dass das Heil nur durch das Gericht kommen wird."<sup>76</sup>

From the above discussion of the remnant in Isaiah's thought, it is clear that the idea of the remnant does not resolve the tension between judgment and grace; it does not provide a bridge from one to the other. On the contrary, it bears witness both to the fierceness of the judgment and the wonder of the salvation through Yahweh's grace. It does not tone either of them down, but rather it confirms each of them by displaying it in sharp contrast with the other. Thus Isaiah's "doctrine" of the remnant is his expression of the theology of judgment and grace that was revealed to him in his call vision. Vriezen summarizes it:

On the basis of his faith in the holy majesty of the living Lord, Isaiah is absolutely certain of both judgment and salvation. He understands his time to be a time of crisis, in which the old world is perishing and the new is about to be born.<sup>77</sup>

There remains to be discussed the so-called doctrine of the inviolability of Zion. This idea is very closely related to the remnant, and much

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>77</sup>"Essentials of the Theology of Isaiah," *op. cit.*, pp. 145-46. Cf. also Dittmann, *op. cit.*, p. 618; Nötscher, *op. cit.*, pp. 113-14; Bernard W. Anderson, Understanding the Old Testament (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1957), p. 285.

of what has been said above will apply here. On the basis of passages like 14:32; 17:12-14; 28:16; 29:5-8; 31:4-9; and 37:31 scholars have concluded that Isaiah firmly believed that, although judgment must come, Yahweh would never permit Zion, the place of his own dwelling, to be destroyed.<sup>78</sup> It is certainly true that Isaiah operates with the Davidic and Zion promises as he portrays the future messianic age--these promises are not revoked. Yet the ultimate fulfillment of these promises requires that Yahweh act both in judgment and in grace. The picture of Yahweh crouching over Jerusalem like a lion crouches over his prey to defend it from a band of shepherds called out against him (31:4-5) is scarcely a comforting scene. He will protect it and deliver it; Zion is inviolable by Assyria. But Yahweh's "rescue" of Jerusalem requires her destruction (31:3). The dialectic of Isaiah's thought about Zion is clear in the oracle in 29:1-8; here Yahweh himself fights against "Ariel" as David once did and lays her waste. Then, unexpectedly, she is visited by Yahweh and delivered from her enemies (29:5-8). "Hier gewinnt das Werk Jahwes für den Zion eine merkwürdige theologische Ambivalenz: es richtet und rettet in einem."<sup>79</sup> Thus the doctrine of the inviolability of Zion expresses the same truth as the concept of the remnant: Yahweh destroys in order to re-create. Judgment and grace stand side by side.

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<sup>78</sup>Among scholars who hold this are Bright, op. cit., p. 279; Anderson, op. cit., p. 284; Lods, op. cit., p. 111; Pedersen, op. cit., p. 552; Cossmann, op. cit., p. 60; Paterson, op. cit., p. 68; Driver, op. cit., p. 110; Gray, op. cit., p. xciv; Kemper Fullerton, "Viewpoints in the Discussion of Isaiah's Hopes for the Future," Journal of Biblical Literature, XLI (1922), 52-54. However, Micklem, op. cit., pp. 171-74, finds little evidence of such a doctrine in Isaiah.

<sup>79</sup>von Rad, op. cit., p. 175.

## The Eschatology of Salvation

There are a number of oracles in Isaiah which quite unconditionally speak of the future salvation of Israel in terms of an ideal messianic age. It has been common practice among a great many scholars simply to assign these passages to post-exilic times, the reason being that the Isaiah who spoke such uncompromising oracles of doom could not possibly have at the same time pointed to such an ideal future restoration for Israel.<sup>80</sup> It is true that, if Isaiah expected a purifying judgment which would destroy the sinful people of Israel and preserve a holy remnant, the passages speaking of unconditional salvation for the whole people would be strangely out of place. But it has been shown above that Isaiah did not look for a purifying judgment; his doctrine of the remnant included full destruction and full restoration. In the light of this, the "inconsistent juxtaposition of uncompromising doom and unequivocal assurance" is precisely the key to Isaiah's theology.<sup>81</sup> Isaiah's call vision gave him the basic elements of his theology; in his own person he experienced Yahweh's judgment and grace and saw that "God destroys to rebuild; he

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<sup>80</sup>Cf. Blank, *op. cit.*, pp. 161ff.; Sheldon H. Blank, "Traces of Prophetic Agony in Isaiah," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, XXVII (1956), 85ff.; Hyatt, *op. cit.*, p. 104; Micklem, *op. cit.*, pp. 155ff.; Kaiser, *op. cit.*, pp. 18, 38; Lindblom, *op. cit.*, pp. 100, 109-10; Fullerton, *op. cit.*, p. 98; Whitley, *op. cit.*, pp. 42ff. Gray, *op. cit.*, pp. xciv-xcv, 44, 77, 168, 214, rejects the messianic passages although he admits Isaiah may have taught a future restoration privately. Budde counsels against Skeptizismus and Schematismus but rejects 2:2-4 and chap. 11; "Zu Jesaja 1-5," *op. cit.*, pp. 182ff.

<sup>81</sup>Bright, *op. cit.*, p. 278; cf. also Vriezen, "Essentials of the Theology of Isaiah," *op. cit.*, pp. 144ff.

tears down to lay a new foundation; he punishes to save."<sup>82</sup>

No doubt the Redaktionsgeschichte of the book of Isaiah is complicated, but there is no reason to doubt that at least part of the arrangement of the oracles is due to the prophet himself. Oracle of judgment stands side by side with oracle of salvation. But this phenomenon provides no reason to delete the oracle of salvation, for the very juxtaposition of the two types of oracles shows the unity of judgment and grace in Isaiah's theology. Hertrich remarks,

Unheilspredigt und Heilspredigt stehen unmittelbar nebeneinander, und es ist auch nicht ein bescheidender Hinweis darauf zu finden, dass der Prophet selbst als der "Mitler" dieses Nebeneinander zu verstehen sei.

The present order of the oracles, he thinks, shows a willful theological arrangement, based "in der Einheit des göttlichen Handelns."<sup>83</sup> Isaiah's messianic oracles cannot be examined here in detail to determine whether there are historical reasons for assigning them to a later date.<sup>84</sup> The following discussion will only serve to demonstrate that these oracles do indeed fit into Isaiah's theology of judgment and grace, and that, unless there is compelling evidence to the contrary, they should be considered

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<sup>82</sup>Henry S. Gehman, "The Ruler of the Universe. The Theology of First Isaiah," Interpretation, XI (1957), 270. Cf. also Dittmann, op. cit., p. 607, who says that judgment and salvation are not really different things, "sondern nur zwei verschiedene Seiten ein- und derselben Erwartung." The unity is in the coming rule of God.

<sup>83</sup>Op. cit., p. 63. Cf. also Hertzberg, op. cit., p. 530, who says, "Die Art, wie Jahve Heil schafft, ist zugleich Gericht. Der Weg, auf dem Jahve zum Gericht kommt, ist zugleich Weg des Heils."

<sup>84</sup>The problematic apocalypse in chaps. 24-27 will not come into consideration here; nor will chaps. 34-35, which seem to be part of Deutero-Isaiah; Marvin Pope, "Isaiah 34 in Relation to Isaiah 35, 40-66," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXI (1952), 235-43, gives detailed reasons of vocabulary, phraseology, ideology and style for this conclusion.

authentic.

The first messianic oracle comes in 2:2-4. This oracle is virtually identical with Micah 4:1-3; it seems probable that the passage was either originally Isaiah's oracle or an oracle older than either Isaiah or Micah.<sup>85</sup> This passage deals with eschatology; the whole world is involved, and Yahweh himself is the ruler in the new Zion. The "mountain of the house of Yahweh" has not always been there, but it will be "established" and "raised" in the latter days (2:2). The day of Yahweh with its fearful judgment on Israel (described in the very next oracle, 2:6-22) must first occur. The present Jerusalem could never be purified enough to fit the description in this oracle; a radical break must take place. It must happen, "dass Gott darauf im Gericht mit einer radikalen Umkehrung des Geschickes seines Volkes antworten werde, und dass er damit dann-- in radikaler Umkehrung des gegenwärtigen Standes--das Heil bringen werde."<sup>86</sup>

The oracle in 8:23-9:6 clearly shows the juxtaposition of judgment and grace even in Isaiah's view of the great messianic age of the future. The situation reflected in 8:23a is perhaps that historical event when Tiglath-Pileser III took possession of much of the northern kingdom of

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<sup>85</sup>Gerhard von Rad, "Die Stadt auf dem Berge," Evangelische Theologie, VIII (1948-49), 440, takes the first alternative; while König, op. cit., pp. 57-59, chooses the latter one.

<sup>86</sup>Johannes Fichtner, "Die 'Umkehrung' in der prophetischen Botschaft. Eine Studie zu dem Verhältnis von Schuld und Gericht in der Verkündigung Jesajas," Theologische Literaturzeitung, LXXVIII (August-September, 1953), 459. On this passage see also Hertrich, op. cit., pp. 26-29; Box, op. cit., p. 31; and W. Staerk, "Zum alttestamentlichen Erwählungsglauben," Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, LV (1937), 21.

Israel in 734-32 B. C.<sup>87</sup> This is not the last word, however. The people (am) in 9:1 are not just a remnant, but they are the whole people of God. There is death and life, darkness and light. In this second creation act of God there is no mention of faith, repentance or purification. It is "the zeal (qin'â) of Yahweh of hosts" (9:6) that will accomplish the salvation of Israel through destruction and recreation.

Die Gerichte Gottes, die über das Land ergehen, sind Unterpfand dafür, dass hier und an keiner anderen Stelle der Beginn der zukünftigen Herrlichkeit sein wird. . . . Die Gewissheit der völligen Vernichtung war dort für ihn der Durchgang zum neuen Leben.<sup>88</sup>

The following oracle of destruction (9:7-10:4) shows that this messianic future does not mean a softening of the coming judgment.

The messianic oracle in 11:1-9 attaches directly onto the twice-burned stump of Isaiah's call vision (6:13). The stump is dead, the destruction is complete. But then the creative power of the spirit of Yahweh (11:2) goes into action, and the holy seed issues forth into a branch, bringing in the messianic age with its return to paradisaal conditions (11:6-9). There is a radical break; the previous oracle ended with the terrifying power of Yahweh lopping down the trees with an ax. "Das Haus David ist gerichtet--aber aus dem Gericht wird der Messias

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<sup>87</sup>This probable historical background is given in detail in Albrecht Alt, "Jesaja 8:23-9:6: Befreiungsnacht und Krönungstag," Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1953), II, 206-25, who considers the passage to be authentic. Margaret B. Crook, "A Suggested Occasion for Isaiah 9:2-7 and 11:1-9," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXVIII (1949), 213ff., seeks to show that this passage is a liturgy of enthronement related to Jehoash of Judah about 837 B. C., thus stemming from a century before Isaiah.

<sup>88</sup>Hertrich, op. cit., pp. 160ff.

hervorgehen."<sup>89</sup> By means of judgment and grace Yahweh leads his people to the fulfillment of his goal: "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of Yahweh" (11:9).

Other messianic oracles in Isaiah illustrate the same unity of the divine action in judgment and grace. In the oracle on Egypt (chap. 19), the destruction planned for Egypt is fierce (19:1-17). But after the smiting comes the healing (19:22), and the result is that Egypt will be one of a trio, with Israel and Assyria, who will receive divine blessing (19:24-25). Yahweh says he will again do marvelous things (29:14)--and this includes both judgment and grace. Vriezen remarks concerning this passage:

The divine manner of action is wonderful because it involves destruction as well as salvation. As evidence of this, note that after 29:14 there follows a prophecy both of disaster and of salvation (29:15-24). Thus these two prophecies, taken together, form the content of the marvelous work of God.<sup>90</sup>

The promise of the consoling future in 30:19-26 likewise includes the elements of smiting and healing by Yahweh: "in the day when Yahweh binds up the hurt of his people, and heals the wounds inflicted by his blow" (30:26). Yahweh's blow had come in the preceding oracle (30:17), leaving Israel in complete destruction. Chapter 32 is almost completely concerned with the future eschatological rule of the righteous king; yet both judgment and grace also come into play here:

For the palace will be forsaken,  
the populous city deserted;  
the hill and the watchtower

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<sup>89</sup>Herntrich, op. cit., pp. 207ff. Cf. Eichrodt, op. cit., p. 245.

<sup>90</sup>"Essentials of the Theology of Isaiah," op. cit., p. 143.

will become dens forever,  
 a joy of wild asses,  
 a pasture of flocks;  
 until the spirit is poured upon us from on high,  
 and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field . . . (32:14-15a).

Thus it is seen that the eschatology of salvation which plays a rather prominent part in Isaiah is the necessary complement to the word of judgment which he preached in such harshness. Judgment and grace stand side by side in unsoftened tension. Yet there is an inner unity between the two which grows out of Isaiah's understanding of the nature of Yahweh.

#### The Nature of Yahweh: His Holy Love

Isaiah himself was a prime witness of the effect of Yahweh's dealing with his people in judgment and grace; he experienced both in his call vision. Upon being cleansed, Isaiah submitted himself to Yahweh's will. Hertzberg calls this "das Sich-ganz-in-den-Dienst-stellen"; he says, "Jesaja der Gottheit gegenüber sich als einen 'Ergriffenen' empfindet, dass sein innerer Zustand durch die völlige Unterordnung vor dem göttlichen Ich gekennzeichnet ist."<sup>91</sup> Yahweh spoke to Isaiah with his strong hand upon him (8:11), and Isaiah responded by waiting and hoping on his God (8:17). Thus Isaiah was in prophetic sympathy with the plan and purpose of Yahweh for Israel; he was a personal representative of this Holy One in their midst. Therefore Isaiah's own feelings about the people, when these feelings are allowed to show themselves, are important

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<sup>91</sup>H. W. Hertzberg, Prophet und Gott: Eine Studie zur Religiosität des vorexilischen Prophetentums (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1923), pp. 41-44.

as reflections of the divine feelings.

Already in his call Isaiah's anguished question, "How long?" was an expression of the suffering which his task of proclaiming judgment to a hardened people brought him. He had a deep sympathy for his people, and when he saw that, in spite of the harshest punishment, they refused to return to Yahweh, he could only say (22:4):

Look away from me,  
let me weep bitter tears;  
do not labor to comfort me  
for the destruction of the daughter of my people.

Stamm says in reference to this passage that, although Isaiah knew the final destruction of Israel was still sure to come,

Dieses bessere Wissen bedeuten ihm aber keinen Triumph, sondern Leiden, weil es sich um sein eigenes Volk handelt, mit dem er unverbrüchlich verbunden geblieben ist. So dürfen wir sehen, dass Jesaja, wenigstens gegen Ende seiner Wirksamkeit, zu leiden hatte am Widerspruch zwischen dem, was seinem natürlichen Wünschen entsprochen hätte, und dem, was die unerbittliche prophetische Erkenntnis ihm offenbarte.<sup>92</sup>

This tension in Isaiah's heart between his love for the people and his conviction that Yahweh's holiness must destroy them appears in other oracles. He describes Israel as a badly mauled body, with bruises and wounds everywhere, and his agony comes out in the question, "Why will you still be smitten, that you continue to rebel?" (1:5-6). There is pain born of the conflict between love for the people and a holy hatred of their sin in the statement: "My people go into exile for want of knowledge" (5:13). The essential identity of his own feelings with Yahweh's

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<sup>92</sup>Johann Jakob Stamm, Das Leiden des Unschuldigen in Babylon und Israel (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1946), p. 62. Cf. von Rad, Theologie des alten Testaments, p. 176; and Blank, "Traces of Prophetic Agony in Isaiah," op. cit., pp. 84ff.

becomes so complete that, in the midst of an oracle describing Yahweh's judgment, he inserts a sorrowful condemnation of the people: "Forgive them not!" (2:9b). This evidence of a tension in Isaiah between his love for the people and his knowledge that they must be punished is a witness to a similar tension existing in the heart of the holy God.

Prophetisches Wort ist nicht geschriebenes Wort, sondern leidenschaftlicher Kampf um das Volk, an das der Prophet sich gesandt weiss, aber ein Kampf, den der Prophet nicht führt im eigenen Auftrag, sondern in der unmittelbaren Gemeinschaft mit seinem Gott.<sup>93</sup>

The basis of Isaiah's theology of judgment and grace is the nature of Yahweh himself. In his call vision Isaiah came to know Yahweh as the Holy One dwelling in the midst of Israel (6:3-5). He saw that the Holy One becomes a devouring fire to a people which is sinful and unholy (6:5; 33:14). So his preaching of total judgment grew out of his knowledge of Yahweh's nature. As Yahweh deals with a people which consistently refuses to put their trust in him but instead rely on their own hybris, his holiness demands that they be destroyed.

Yet this same holy nature of Yahweh was the basis for Isaiah's hope for a restoration of Israel in the messianic age. For Yahweh has conceived a plan for the world, in order to achieve the goal stated as a present reality in Isaiah's vision: that his glory become the fulness of the earth (6:3). Even though Israel refuses to accept his plan, still the divine purpose cannot be thwarted. Although God's holiness requires

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<sup>93</sup>Herntrich, op. cit., pp. 35, 84. Cf. von Rad, Theologie des alten Testaments, p. 177. Blank, "Traces of Prophetic Agony in Isaiah," op. cit., pp. 91-92, thinks it was Isaiah's agony that caused him to preserve a book (8:16; 30:8) for generations that he knew (since he had no hope) were not to be.

that Israel be destroyed, that same holiness is the guarantee that he will recreate Israel and so bring his plan to perfection. Bright remarks, "Isaiah did not, for all this, surrender hope. His doctrine of God was far too vast for him to suppose that the nation's dereliction could frustrate the divine purpose and cancel the promises."<sup>94</sup> Thus the nature of Yahweh as the Holy One of Israel was the basis, not only for Isaiah's proclamation of judgment, but also for his proclamation of grace. Vriezen states it this way:

Although convinced on the basis of the knowledge of God's holiness that his people are ripe for judgment, Isaiah is nonetheless sure on the basis of the same might and glory of the holy God that after the day of judgment a new life for Israel and a new creation will be manifest.<sup>95</sup>

Yahweh's activity in both judgment and grace has its unity in his holiness. However, Isaiah provides some indications that within this unity based in holiness there is tension between love and wrath. Yahweh's holy love wins the ultimate triumph, but not without becoming a suffering love. Yahweh lavished much loving care on the people of Israel; he brought them up as his sons. A master of dumb animals expects them to know him--but Yahweh's own sons rebelled and refused to understand (1:2-3). The parable of the vineyard reveals some of the divine pathos (5:1-7). Yahweh expended extraordinary care on Israel as his vineyard, and then he waited and hoped for grapes--but all he got were wild grapes. In the frustration of his love he asks, "What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it?" (5:4). The rejection of his holy love

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<sup>94</sup>Op. cit., p. 275. Cf. Paterson, op. cit., p. 75.

<sup>95</sup>"Essentials of the Theology of Isaiah," op. cit., p. 144.

brings the consuming fire of divine wrath, as Yahweh becomes weary and disgusted with the people (5:5ff.; 1:4ff.). He cannot stand their futile efforts to appease him (1:12ff.); his holy wrath wreaks total destruction upon them (9:11ff.; 28:21). The most terrible judgment takes place: Yahweh casts off his people (2:6). Now "my people" (1:3) become "this people" (6:9).

Yet Yahweh's wrath does not extinguish his love. Rather, the tension between love and wrath causes suffering for Yahweh. A hint of this is seen in Yahweh's anguished cry: "My people—children are their oppressors, and women rule over them" (3:12). In spite of Yahweh's rejection of his people in his wrath, he cannot refrain from promising a restoration for "my people" (10:24). Although he once waited in vain for his vineyard to produce good grapes (5:1-4), his love causes him to wait once more, waiting and hoping that his grace and mercy will recreate the people whom he has just destroyed down to the last flagstaff on the top of the mountain (30:17-18). The zeal (qin'â) of the holy God<sup>96</sup> brought judgment on Israel; but this same holy zeal will recreate Israel and usher in the messianic age, when Yahweh will bring history to its goal (9:6; 37:32).

Isaiah says no more about the suffering of Yahweh in the conflict between his holy love and his holy wrath. It is left to the great prophet of the exile to deepen this idea in some of its most sublime expressions in the Old Testament (cf. Is. 42:14; 49:14-15; 54:7-8; and the servant poems). Isaiah makes it quite clear, however, that salvation for Israel

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<sup>96</sup>Hänel, op. cit., pp. 49ff., 196ff., has coined the expressive term "Eiferheiligkeit."

is based on the holy nature of God, as he deals with his people in judgment and in grace. This is Isaiah's witness to the cross. Fichtner remarks, "Durch das Gericht aber führt Gott zum Heil. Auch im Neuen Bunde gibt es um der Gerechtigkeit Gottes willen kein Heil ohne das Gericht, das Jesus Christus für die Welt auf sich genommen hat."<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup>"Die 'Umkehrung' in der prophetischen Botschaft: Eine Studie zu dem Verhältnis von Schuld und Gericht in der Verkündigung Jesajas," op. cit., p. 64.

## CHAPTER V

### JEREMIAH: GOD'S PAINFUL LOVE

#### Jeremiah's Call: The Leitmotiv of His Message

Jeremiah's divine commissioning stands at the beginning of the collection of his oracles (1:4-10). It is from his call experience that he receives both his authority to be Yahweh's personal messenger and the basic elements of that message. The outward circumstances of the call experience are not spelled out, but it is apparently a prophetic vision in which Jeremiah enters into dialogue with Yahweh, and Yahweh touches Jeremiah's mouth with his hand.<sup>1</sup>

The use of the man Jeremiah as Yahweh's messenger to the world had been planned in the divine counsel even before Jeremiah was conceived in his mother's womb. Yahweh informs him:

Before I formed you (ʾessārēkā) in the womb I knew You (yedaʿtîkā), and before you came forth from the womb I set you apart (hiqdaštîkā); a prophet to the nations I appointed you (netattîkā).

The four verbs which have Yahweh as subject and Jeremiah as object show the divine oneness of Jeremiah's commissioning. The action is completely from Yahweh's side. The divine wonder of creation and election takes place when Jeremiah has no existence at all by himself. Thus here

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<sup>1</sup>Artur Weiser, Das Buch des Propheten Jeremia: Kapitel 1-25:14, in Das Alte Testament Deutsch, edited by Artur Weiser (4. Auflage; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), XX, 4, thinks Jeremiah's call in 1:4-10 represents experiences that took a longer period of time. It seems more probable, however, that this call was actually a one-time experience that stamped his whole ministry.

is expressed the same theological truth that was brought home to Isaiah in his call: Isaiah had to become nothing before God so that he might be recreated and consecrated for his office (Is. 6:5-7). Likewise, when Jeremiah was nothing before God, God created him and consecrated him for his office. Yahweh knew him (yāda'); this word signifies Yahweh's election of Jeremiah to a special personal relationship in which his love and attachment play a large part (cf. Amos 3:2). This word of Jeremiah's election "greift zurück ins Jenseits der Grenzen seiner irdischen Existenz und legt das Fundament frei, wo dieses Leben eingebettet ist in den ewigen Ratschluss Gottes."<sup>2</sup> By an act of creation (yāsar) Yahweh carried out his divine election and brought Jeremiah into existence.<sup>3</sup> But even before he came out of his mother's womb the divine stamp had been placed on him; Yahweh sanctified him (hiqdîš), set him apart for divine service in the midst of a profane people (cf. Jer. 15:17; 16:1). And Yahweh commissioned him (nātan) as a prophet to the nations (laggôyim). He was placed into the service of the sovereign lord of all the earth, and this required that his task be a universal one. Welch comments on the relationship between Jeremiah's mission to the nations and his consecration before his birth:

The prophet to the nations is set apart to his calling, before he has been born into any nation. He does not represent the will of God for Israel alone. . . . But he represents the will of God for mankind,<sup>4</sup> and to do that it is sufficient that he should be a man.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Volkmar Hertrich, Jeremia der Prophet und sein Volk (Gütersloh: Verlag C. Bertelsmann, 1938), p. 17.

<sup>4</sup>Adam C. Welch, Jeremiah: His Time and His Work (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955), pp. 40-41. Cf. also Is. 42:6; 49:5f.

The vastness of the task calls forth hesitation on Jeremiah's part: "Ah, Adonai Yahweh, behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth" (1:6). He cannot plead unfitness of character (cf. Is. 6:5) for he had been consecrated before birth; rather, recognizing his lack of experience and peculiar personality, he feels overwhelmed by so great a commission. Thus he becomes

das klassische Beispiel dafür, wie Gott den Menschen, den er zu seinem Werkzeug bestimmt, zunächst in schwere Kämpfe mit sich selber hineinführt, um ihn durch die Selbstüberwindung im Gehorsam zu bereiten zum Kampf, für den er ihn braucht.<sup>5</sup>

But Yahweh categorically rejects Jeremiah's objection without bothering to give any reason for doing so; the divine logic is not bound to human considerations of success and failure. Yahweh simply insists on the very feature that made Jeremiah shrink from the task:

Do not say, "I am only a youth";  
for to all to whom I send you you will go,  
and all that I command you you shall speak.  
Do not fear before them,  
for I am with you to deliver you (1:7-8).

Complete obedience is required, even before Jeremiah knows what it is that he is to speak to the nations (cf. 20:7). Yet Yahweh does not require this blind trust without also giving a promise that, even though the terrifying commission will concern matters of life and death, he will be with Jeremiah to deliver him.

After touching Jeremiah's mouth to signify that his own powerful word is in the mouth of his prophet, Yahweh gives Jeremiah his commission:

See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and the kingdoms,  
to pluck up and to break down,

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<sup>5</sup>Weiser, *op. cit.*, XX, 6.

to destroy and to overthrow,  
to build and to plant (1:9-10).

Jeremiah's task is to be a double-sided one: as the plenipotentiary to the nations (cf. the verb hipqîd) he is to pluck up and break down (nātaš and nātaš), but he is also to do exactly the opposite by building and planting (bānâ and nātaš). In other words, as Yahweh's prophet he is to carry out the functions of divine judgment and divine grace. He is able to perform this dialectical task because of the power of the prophetic word which has been placed in his mouth, the word which burns and smashes as it shapes history and creates the future (cf. 23:29; 5:14). Thus the activities of destruction and creation, which seem so contradictory to the human mind, are united in the divine plan of action. There is no idea of a chronological succession here, with first destruction and then rebuilding. Both activities are simultaneous; at the same time Yahweh's word breaks down and builds up. As Weiser states,

Der Text redet jedenfalls nicht von einer zeitlichen Aufeinanderfolge, sondern von einem Nebeneinander. Gerade darin besteht das Gotteswunder, dass in dem Gericht die Gnade Gottes am Werk ist, die aufbaut, indem sie zerstört, und mitten im Untergang neues Leben schafft.<sup>6</sup>

Immediately following the account of Jeremiah's call two visions are described. Again the outer circumstances of these visions are not described, but it seems natural to relate them to his call (cf. Amos 7-8; Is. 6:1ff.; Ez. 1:1ff.). Here Jeremiah receives additional revelation from Yahweh concerning his task; therefore it may be expected "that the

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 8. Cf. also Hertrich, op. cit., p. 19; and Paul Volz, Der Prophet Jeremiah (Dritte Auflage; Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1930), p. 46.

account of the call shall throw light on the visions, and that the visions may correct or support the view taken of the call."<sup>7</sup> In the first vision, Jeremiah sees a rod of almond (šāqēd), and Yahweh gives him the interpretation that "I am watching over (šōqēd) my word to perform it" (Jer. 1:11-12). Although some connection may be intended between the almond tree as the first to awaken in the spring in Palestine and Yahweh who is waking over his word,<sup>8</sup> the main accent seems to be on the similar sound of the two words (cf. Amos 8:1-2). Yahweh is giving his personal assurance to Jeremiah that the word which the prophet is to proclaim will be an effective word. Jeremiah knew that prophets before him had prophesied both doom and promise, and yet neither had seemed to materialize. This would be the objection of the people to his message (cf. Jer. 17:15). But here at his call Yahweh assures Jeremiah that he is watching over his word and will see that it achieves its goal, namely, to break down and to build up. "The word over which Yahweh is wakeful is the word of threatening as well as the word of promise and hope."<sup>9</sup> Jeremiah's preaching reveals the significance this vision had for him (e.g., 31:28; 44:27).

The second vision (1:13-14) presents a boiling cauldron with its face from the north (pānāiu mipp<sup>e</sup>nê šāpônā). The picture itself is somewhat difficult, but the interpretation is clear: Yahweh says, "Out of the

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<sup>7</sup>Welch, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. George Adam Smith, Jeremiah (Fourth edition; New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, [1929]), p. 85.

<sup>9</sup>John Skinner, Prophecy and Religion: Studies in the Life of Jeremiah (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1922), p. 32. Cf. Welch, op. cit., p. 48.

north evil shall break forth (tippātah) upon all the inhabitants of the land." Here again is an essential element in Jeremiah's preaching: Yahweh is bringing destruction on his people from the north (e.g., 4:6ff.; 6:1,22; 10:22). The reference here is hardly to a concrete historical nation or situation; even if 1:15-16 should belong in this context, the phrase "all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north" is hardly precise. Verse 16 makes it clear that it is ultimately Yahweh himself who is entering into judgment with his perverted people. "Der Prophet denkt nicht von der Politik aus, sondern von Gott her; er ist der eigentliche Urheber auch des politischen Geschehens."<sup>10</sup>

Thus, in Jeremiah's call and in the two visions related to his call, the essential elements of his message were revealed to him. The revelation in his call became the leitmotiv<sup>11</sup> of his whole career as Yahweh's prophet. First of all the divine wonder of election and creation took place in Jeremiah himself. His intense inner struggle was overwhelmed by Yahweh's demand of utter obedience to his commission, together with Yahweh's promise of deliverance. In his mission to the nations Jeremiah was to tear down and pluck up, to build up and plant by proclaiming the dynamic prophetic word (cf. 12:2-3; 12:15-17; 18:7ff.; 24:6-7, 31:28,40; 32:41; 42:10; 45:4). He could be sure, in spite of all appearances, that Yahweh was watching over his word and would make it effective. The time of Judah's destruction was imminent; the cauldron of evil in the

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<sup>10</sup>Weiser, op. cit., XX, 10. Cf. Welch, op. cit., pp. 50ff.

<sup>11</sup>So Curt Kuhl, The Prophets of Israel, translated by Rudolf J. Ehrlich and J. P. Smith (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1950), p. 106.

north was already boiling. And so, when the command came, "But you, gird up your loins; arise and say to them everything that I command you" (1:17), Jeremiah was prepared to devote himself to the task of tearing down and building up.

#### Plucking Up and Breaking Down

In accordance with his commission, Jeremiah proclaimed the harsh judgment of Yahweh with extreme severity. Like the great prophets before him, he connected the judgment which Yahweh was bringing against Israel directly with Yahweh's election of Israel. There is a direct relationship between the care which Yahweh expended on his chosen people and the fierceness with which he turns against his people when they reject his love. "So ist Gottes Zorngericht über das treubruchige Volk als die Kehrseite der Erwählung Gottes zu verstehen."<sup>12</sup>

The people of Israel were well aware of their election. Even though the northern kingdom met destruction, the people of Judah held fast to the Davidic promises and the security implied in Yahweh's choice of Zion. All the prophets before Jeremiah had come up against this problem of election security to some extent, and for this reason they usually refrained from using the very word "covenant." However, by Jeremiah's time the deep popular belief in the indestructibility of God's people and the inviolability of Zion had become a guiding principle even in Judah's

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<sup>12</sup>Weiser, *op. cit.*, XX, p. XXXI. Cf. also W. Cossmann, Die Entwicklung des Gerichtsgedankens bei den alttestamentlichen Propheten (Giessen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann, 1915), p. 89, who says that Yahweh's rejected love reacts in Rachegericht and Vernichtungsgericht.

political policy. No doubt this popular belief grew rapidly after the miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem when it lay under siege in 701 B. C. (cf. Is. 37:36ff.). The people misunderstood Isaiah's insistence that Yahweh would "rescue" Zion (Is. 31:4-5), and it became orthodox doctrine that Jerusalem would stand forever. Bright remarks, "It is entirely likely that Jeremiah's bitterest opponents (26:7-11) were small-minded disciples of Isaiah not half up to their master's stature!"<sup>13</sup> On the basis of the doctrine of the indestructibility of Israel, the popular prophets proclaimed peace and counseled against surrendering to the Babylonians (6:14; 27:9). The people put their trust in the temple, the dwelling of Yahweh (7:4ff.; 26:9). Even King Zedekiah was not dissuaded from the popular belief by the events of 596 B. C. and expressed the hope: "Perhaps Yahweh will deal with us according to all his wonderful deeds" (21:2).

Thus Jeremiah had to contend with this perverted view of Israel's election; he had to oppose the "dogmatics of a guardian deity."<sup>14</sup> In answer to Zedekiah's hope that Yahweh would again perform a wonderful act as he had in the past, Jeremiah assents; Yahweh will again fight with outstretched hand and strong arm, as he had done in the exodus from Egypt--but this time he will fight against Israel: "I myself will fight against you with outstretched hand and strong arm, in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath" (21:5). Jeremiah concedes that it is true that Yahweh

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<sup>13</sup>John Bright, A History of Israel (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959), p. 311.

<sup>14</sup>Martin Buber, The Prophetic Faith, translated from the Hebrew by Carlyle Witton-Davies (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), p. 178.

gave the land to his elected people as their heritage; but because of their sin he will tear them loose and cast them into a foreign land, "for in my anger a fire is kindled which shall burn forever" (17:1-4). The people's blind hope in their election knew no bounds; when the Babylonian army temporarily withdrew its siege of Jerusalem to attend to Pharaoh of Egypt, the people were convinced of the validity of their popular dogma: "The Chaldeans will surely stay away from us." But Jeremiah knew that in the purpose of Yahweh the nation of Judah was doomed; the covenant could and would be broken. Do not be deceived, Jeremiah told the people,

For even if you should smite the whole army of Chaldeans who are fighting against you, and there remained of them only wounded men, each man in his tent, they would rise up and burn this city with fire (37:5-10).

In Yahweh's counsel, it did not hold true that Israel's election implied their indestructibility. In fact, just the opposite was true, according to Amos' dictum: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos 3:2). Jeremiah brings this home again and again to his contemporaries; their election is not a sign of security but of tension, for the very God who dwells in their exalted temple will turn in fury against a people which rejects his electing love. Jeremiah, as Yahweh's agent for plucking up and breaking down his people, never tires of documenting the same charge against Israel with its corresponding judgment: in spite of Yahweh's tender care for Israel, she rejected him and consistently went her own way. Therefore Yahweh's judgment would inevitably come, when he would cast off his people and destroy them.

Yahweh reminisces on his honeymoon with Israel:

I remember the faithful love of your youth,  
 the love of your betrothal time,  
 your following after me in the wilderness,  
 in a land not sown.  
 Israel was holy to Yahweh (2:2-3a).

Yahweh took exquisite care of his elected people (2:6-7); yet he has to ask the disappointed question, "What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far away from me?" (2:5a). It is utterly incomprehensible that Israel should reject him:

Does a maiden forget her ornaments,  
 or a bride her attire?  
 But my people have forgotten me  
 days without number (2:32).

Such faithlessness can only end in harsh judgment (2:15-19,35-37); a divorce must take place (3:1-10). Yahweh made provision for his people, filling them to the full; but they could only think of trooping to the houses of harlotry. In sorrow Yahweh asks, "How can I pardon you?" and answers with another question, "Shall I not punish them for these things?" (5:7-9). As a result of his extravagant care Yahweh looked for a good harvest from his vineyard; but he found no grapes or figs at all and realized that his care had been futile (8:13).

The oracle in 11:15-17, though difficult textually, strikingly shows the relationship between election and judgment: she who was once Yahweh's beloved no longer has any place in his house. The text, with some emendations, reads as follows:

What right has my beloved in my house,  
 when she has done evil devices?  
 Can vows (han@dārîm for hārabîm) and sacrificial flesh  
 cause your evil to pass from you,  
 that you might then exalt?  
 "A fresh olive tree, fair with goodly fruit,"  
 Yahweh called your name;  
 but to the sound of a mighty storm

he will kindle a fire upon her,  
and its branches will break.  
For Yahweh of hosts, who planted you,  
has pronounced evil against you.

The meaning is clear: because the elected people have done evil, the God of the election will destroy his own people. Jeremiah's symbolic action with the waistcloth (chap. 13) brought this message of election/judgment concretely before the people's eyes. As the waistcloth clings to the loins of a man, so Yahweh made Israel cling to him, intending them to be "a people, a name, a praise, and a glory" for him--but they would not listen. Therefore, just as Jeremiah discarded the waistcloth and let it decay, so Yahweh would cast off his people. Further intercession on behalf of this people would be to no avail. Although the great intercessors themselves, Moses and Samuel (cf. Ex. 32:11ff.; 1 Sam. 7:5ff.), stood before Yahweh, they would not again succeed in causing him to change his mind. The sentence stands: "Send them out of my sight!" (Jer. 15:1; cf. 7:16; 11:14; 14:11).

This sin of Israel which brought forth the wrath of Yahweh was not the neglect of their election but the perversion of it. Instead of letting their lives be ruled by the electing God, they sought to be their own lords and use Yahweh for their own ends. Their sin consisted "darin, dass dieses Volk, das durch die Barmherzigkeit Gottes überreich begnadet ist, nicht mehr aus der Gnade allein leben will."<sup>15</sup> In answer to the people's question, "What is our iniquity?," Yahweh answers: "Because your fathers have forsaken me . . . , and you have done worse than your fathers, for

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<sup>15</sup>Herntrich, op. cit., pp. 26-27.

behold, every one of you follows his own stubborn will, refusing to listen to me" (16:10-13). Although Yahweh continually attempted to get through to them, getting up early (haškēm) and sending prophets to warn them, they just as persistently refused to listen and insisted on ruling their own lives (11:7-8; 29:19; 35:13-17). Indeed, this proclivity to evil was their habitus; they had shown that it was impossible for them to return to Yahweh (5:23; 8:5ff.; 13:23ff.).

The judgment which Yahweh will bring upon the people who have perverted their election is presented from different angles in Jeremiah. The basic judgment is the reversal of the election: Yahweh has rejected his people. From this abrogation of the election flows both spiritual and physical judgment. Jeremiah, like Isaiah, saw that the people's sin itself was part of Yahweh's judgment on them. "Wenn ein Volk Gottes Gnade ausschlägt, verfällt es den Dämonen seiner eigenen Torheit."<sup>16</sup> The people who rejected Yahweh's word became hardened in their sin, and their last state is worse than the first: "Have you not brought this upon yourself? . . . Your wickedness will chasten you, and your apostasy will reprove you" (2:17-19; cf. 4:18; 5:21,25; 6:16-19; 8:6).

Alongside this judgment of being hardened in sin is the physical judgment Yahweh is bringing against his people. During his early ministry Jeremiah warned of the fierce destruction which was breaking upon Israel from the north, as this had been revealed to him in his call (1:13f.; cf. 4:5ff.; 5:15ff.; 6:1ff.,22; 8:16). It has become fashionable among

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<sup>16</sup>Weiser, op. cit., XX, pp. XXXV, 18. Cf. also Skinner, op. cit., pp. 159ff.

scholars to suppose that Jeremiah first uttered these oracles in reference to the hoards of Scythians which, according to Herodotus, were erupting into Asia at this time. Later, when it became evident that the ones to be feared were the Babylonians, Jeremiah reworked the oracles to fit this new terror.<sup>17</sup> However, the historical reliability of the statement by Herodotus is questionable, and there are no other sources supporting his report of a Scythian eruption at this time. Thus it seems best not to press the identification of the foe from the north with the Scythians. Welch, after a careful study of the evidence, concludes that Jeremiah was not referring to any historical nation at all; rather, he was speaking of an eschatological judgment by God on the sinful world.<sup>18</sup> It is true that some of the descriptions of the foe from the north have features of an invading army (4:16-17,29; 6:4-6,22-23). However, the descriptions quite easily pass over into the popular features of the day of Yahweh (yôm yhw) with its eschatological overtones (4:13ff.; 4:23ff.; 25:15ff.). Thus Jeremiah, like the other prophets, made use of both political events and features of the day of Yahweh in describing the judgment Yahweh was bringing on the people. Of course, when the Babylonian threat grew imminent, Jeremiah proclaimed that Yahweh's plan included the use of this nation to destroy his people (chaps. 21ff.). This would result in the destruction of Jerusalem, the slaughter of most of the inhabitants, and the exile of the remainder (cf. 21:3-7; 25:8-11; etc.).

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<sup>17</sup>E.g., Smith, op. cit., pp. 73, 110ff., 381-83; S. R. Driver, An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament (New York: The Meridian Library, 1956), pp. 252-53; Skinner, op. cit., pp. 39ff.

<sup>18</sup>Op. cit., pp. 97-131.

It is clear that, whatever form the judgment would take, it was Yahweh himself, the God of the election, who was bringing the judgment against his people. It was no fateful march of history that spelled ultimate doom for this small nation of Judah; it was Yahweh, plucking up and breaking down the people of his own possession.

The prophets did not begin from the Assyrians or Scythians or Babylonians. . . . They began from Yahweh, whose character and whose standards they knew, and whose perfect will could not fail to bring about His end.<sup>19</sup>

This is what gives Jeremiah's proclamation of judgment its fearful tension: it is the very God who dwells in their midst who is punishing the people (14:9-10). The divine "I" is the ultimate agent of their destruction: "Now it is I who speak in judgment upon them" (4:12; cf. 4:8; 5:14; 8:15; 9:10; 12:8; 15:7; 21:5). This means the only prospect for Judah is total destruction (5:6,31; 6:9; 7:32-34; 8:3; 9:10,19f.; 14:16; 15:2; 16:16-18; 13:14; 21:7). God's activity in plucking up and breaking down will be complete.

#### The "Perhaps" of Repentance

Jeremiah spoke the word of judgment to the people in all its harshness. But he was sent to them both to tear down and to build up. This means that also the word of judgment which he spoke had the double purpose of razing and building. In Jeremiah it becomes clearer than in any of the prophets before him that Yahweh kept on sending his prophets with messages of judgment in order to bring the people to repentance.

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 118-19.

The prophets spoke of judgment and therein they did predict. But they spoke of judgment that they might move the nation to repent and return, that the final triumph might be with divine mercy.<sup>20</sup>

Again and again Jeremiah states that Yahweh had taken extraordinary measures throughout Israel's history, rising early and sending prophets, with the purpose of causing his erring people to repent (11:7; 7:25).

It is in this succession of Unheilspropheten that Jeremiah stands, sent to proclaim the doom of Israel--and at the same time and by the same word to call for a decision between repentance or disobedience, between life or death. For he speaks Yahweh's own dynamic, effective word, and "wenn Gott redet, dann geht es entweder um Bekehrung--oder das Volk muss Gott selbst verwerfen."<sup>21</sup> Jeremiah's word was truly a word of the last hour, for he lived in a time when Yahweh's purpose brought his elected nation before the very doors of death. And yet there always remained the "perhaps" of repentance.

Because his proclamation was a word of the last hour, Jeremiah was very persistent in using his word of judgment to call the people to a decision. At the beginning of the reign of King Jehoiakim (ca. 608 B. C.) Yahweh sent Jeremiah to deliver a speech in the temple warning the people that Yahweh was about to destroy this temple as he had the temple at Shiloh (7:1-15; 26:1-6). But, even as Amos had proclaimed the divine "perhaps" (ʔûlai) of repentance, so also Jeremiah was sent with a message

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<sup>20</sup>John Paterson, The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), p. 9. Cf. also Cossmann, op. cit., p. 90; Skinner, op. cit., pp. 75ff.

<sup>21</sup>Hertrich, op. cit., pp. 28-30; cf. Weiser, op. cit., XX, p. XXX.

of "perhaps." As Yahweh sent him, he said: "Perhaps (ʔūlai) they will listen, and each one will return from his evil way, and I will repent (nihamtî) of the evil which I have devised to do to them because of their evil deeds" (26:3). In the uproar that followed his temple address, the priests and prophets wanted to put him to death because he had spoken heresy against the orthodox doctrine of the inviolability of Jerusalem. But Jeremiah once again made it clear that his proclamation of doom was to bring about repentance:

Yahweh sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words which you heard. Now therefore make good your ways and your deeds, and hearken to the voice of Yahweh your God; and Yahweh will repent (yinnāhēm) of the evil which he spoke against you (26:12-13; cf. 7:4-7).

At this point some of the elders of the people recalled that, in the days of King Hezekiah, the prophet Micah had proclaimed doom to the city: "Zion shall be plowed as a field, Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height" (26:18; cf. Micah 3:12). But this dire prediction had not come to pass because Hezekiah took the warning to heart and Yahweh "repented (yinnāhēm) of the evil which he spoke against them" (Jer. 26:19). Therefore even in the present situation the word of judgment created the possibility of repentance; perhaps, if the people chose life instead of death, Yahweh would change his mind about destroying them.

There are many other oracles of Jeremiah which show the possibility of repentance in the face of the word of judgment. After establishing the guilt of both kingdoms of Israel (3:6-11), Jeremiah proclaims the possibility of a return to Yahweh and forgiveness from him:

Return, O faithless Israel, says Yahweh,  
 I will not look on you with disfavor,  
 for I am merciful, says Yahweh.  
 I will not be angry forever.  
 Only acknowledge your guilt,  
 that you rebelled against Yahweh your God . . . .  
 Return, O faithless children, says Yahweh,  
 for I am your master (3:12-14).

Jeremiah portrays for the people how eagerly Yahweh is awaiting their repentance; he seizes on the first sounds of remorse from them (3:21) and promises, "Return, O faithless sons, I will heal your faithlessness" (3:22; cf. Hos. 14:2-5). Jeremiah even offers them the ideal liturgy of repentance with which to approach Yahweh (3:22b-25).<sup>22</sup> The Gattung of exhortation (Mahnwort) becomes prominent in Jeremiah's preaching, usually coupled with the threat of Yahweh's judgment.

Break up your fallow ground,  
 and do not sow among thorns.  
 Circumcise yourselves to Yahweh,  
 remove the foreskin of your hearts,  
 O men of Judah and men of Jerusalem.  
 Lest my wrath go forth as fire,  
 and burn with none to quench it,  
 because of the evil of your doings (4:3b-4).

Jeremiah pleads with the people to heed Yahweh's word (2:31), to wash their hearts from wickedness (4:14), to be warned lest Yahweh be alienated (6:8), to give glory to Yahweh (13:16). Yahweh is so anxious to pardon that he sends Jeremiah to run to and fro in the streets trying to find someone who does justice (5:1). Jeremiah himself gets so emotionally involved in trying to bring the people to repentance that he cries out in frustration: "O land, land, land, hear the word of Yahweh!" (22:29).

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<sup>22</sup>That this is an "ideal picture of national conversion" is recognized by Skinner, op. cit., pp. 87-88.

The visual illustration of the potter remaking a spoiled piece of clay brought home the truth that Yahweh is ever willing to repent (nihamtî) of the evil which he had planned against a nation, if that nation is brought to repentance with this word of judgment (18:7-8).

Even when Jeremiah's word of judgment had no effect, the "perhaps" of repentance was not withdrawn. After Jeremiah was barred from going to the temple (36:5), Yahweh told him to write on a scroll all the words which he had spoken against the people, for this reason: "Perhaps (ûlai) the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I intend to do to them, so that every one may turn from his evil way, and that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin" (36:3; cf. 36:7). And when the nation literally stood before the door of death with the Babylonian army besieging the city, the word of judgment was still a call to repentance, to a decision between life and death: "Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death." The choice was a very concrete one: either to stay in the city and die or to surrender to the Babylonians and live (21:8-10; 27:11ff.; 38:2,17ff.). However, Jeremiah was not interested in the political implications behind this "treason" (38:4); he was calling for a religious decision of faith and obedience to God (cf. Deut. 11:26; 30:15; Josh. 24:14ff.).<sup>23</sup> Even when this last call to repentance failed and Judah was destroyed, Yahweh was still holding open the possibility of forgiveness. When the scattered remnant left in Judah after the catastrophe were deciding whether or not to flee to Egypt, once more a decision of life and death was placed before them: "If you remain

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<sup>23</sup>Cf. Weiser, op. cit., XX, 179-80.

in this land . . . I will repent of the evil which I did to you" (42:10).

Although the "perhaps" of repentance was always there as long as the word of judgment was being proclaimed, it never became a reality. Yahweh's persistent efforts to bring the people to repentance were frustrated. In spite of the fierceness of Jeremiah's preaching of judgment, the people refused to be shamed (3:3; 6:15) and kept on protesting their innocence: "I am innocent; surely his anger has turned from me; I have not sinned" (2:35). They thought of Yahweh as a quantité négligeable: "He will do nothing; no evil will come upon us" (5:12).<sup>24</sup> Zedekiah answered the "perhaps" of repentance with a "perhaps" of his own, without any thought of repentance: "Perhaps (ḵûlai) Yahweh will deal with us according to all his wonderful deeds" (21:2). Although there were some outward signs of repentance (especially Josiah's reform), it remained only outward: "Judah did not return to me with her whole heart, but in pretence (b'ešeqer), says Yahweh" (3:10). The people wanted to return to Yahweh and play the harlot with other gods at the same time (3:1ff.). Even though they could say in very pious tones, "As Yahweh lives," Yahweh could see through their hypocrisy: "but they swear falsely" (laššeqer, 5:2). In 14:7-9 the people seem to be using a prophetic liturgy of repentance, for a drought (14:1-6) has caused them to come pleading to Yahweh. They confess their sins and remind Yahweh that they are called by his name. Yet Yahweh's answer shows that their repentance is false; he refuses to accept them and forbids further prayer to him (14:10-12). "Statt der erwarteten Heilzusage enthält die göttliche Antwort die

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

Kündigung des Unheils."<sup>25</sup>

Although Jeremiah left open the possibility of repentance, he knew that the people would not repent. Their hearts had become so hardened that they could not turn back to Yahweh. Jeremiah probes beyond the individual misdeeds and points out the essential sinful nature of the people. As Cossmann says,

Die Sünde ist ihm ja keine Einzeltat, sondern ein habitus im Leben des einzelnen und des Volkes. Sie schafft einen Zustand, der keiner Besserung fähig ist. . . . Gerade dieser Tatbestand habitueller Sündhaftigkeit drängt zum Gericht, weil ja kein anderer Ausweg zur Besserung hilft.<sup>26</sup>

This sinful habitus of the people, which made their repentance impossible, is documented in many of Jeremiah's oracles. They are unable to wash away the stain of their guilt, for they are like a restive young camel in heat, sniffing the wind in her lust. Any call to repentance is met with the statement: "It is hopeless, for I have loved strangers, and after them I will go" (2:22-25; cf. 6:16-18; 18:12). The people are foolish and senseless, for they have eyes and do not see, ears and do not hear (5:21); in fact, their ears are uncircumcised and "they are not able to listen" (6:10). They have a "stubborn and rebellious heart" (5:23; 7:24). The prophets prophesy falsely, but the people are of such a false nature that they love to have it so (5:31); "mundus vult decipi."<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, the people will not listen to Jeremiah, Yahweh tells him

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>26</sup>Op. cit., p. 161. Cf. H. W. Hertzberg, Prophet und Gott: Eine Studie zur Religiosität des vorexilischen Prophetentums (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1923), p. 175; Weiser, op. cit., XX, p. XXXV.

<sup>27</sup>Weiser, op. cit., XX, 50.

(7:27). Their sin is engraved on their deceitful heart with a pen of iron (17:1,9). Jeremiah is sent as an assayer and tester among the people; he finds that the refining process is in vain, for all the people are wicked: "'Refuse silver' they are called, for Yahweh has rejected them" (6:27-30). Jeremiah is given the task of a grape-gleaner, to run his hand over every leaf in his search for some good in the people, but he finds nothing (6:9-10).<sup>28</sup> He goes to both small and great, "but they all alike had broken the yoke" (5:3-5). Even the stork in the heavens knows her times, but Yahweh's people do not know him; they turn away in "perpetual apostasy" (mexûbâ nissahat, 8:5-7). There is no hope that their sinful nature will be changed:

Can the Ethiopian change his skin  
or the leopard his spots?  
Then also you will be able to do good  
who are wont to do evil (13:23).

The people are bound to the verdict: "non posset non peccare."<sup>29</sup>

Thus, even though Yahweh's word of judgment is intended to bring the people to repentance, this proves to be an impossible way to their salvation. They are not able to repent; therefore Yahweh must destroy them.

#### Salvation in Judgment

It is precisely at the point when the people are doomed to destruction because of their inability to repent that the surprising thing

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<sup>28</sup>On these two passages see Elmer A. Leslie, Jeremiah (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954), pp. 65-66; 73-74; Skinner, op. cit., p. 156.

<sup>29</sup>Cf. Weiser, op. cit., XX, 118; Adolphe Lods, The Prophets and the Rise of Judaism, translated by S. H. Hooke (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1955), p. 170.

happens: alongside the expected oracles of judgment appear unexpected oracles of salvation for the people. It has been shown above that repentance on the part of the people cannot be the bridge that leads from judgment to salvation. The double task of tearing down and building up was given to Jeremiah at the time of his call (1:10); he was to bring about both judgment and salvation for the people. What is the relationship between the two?

Sanders states, "The consideration of the relation between calamity and hope has been very thin in the study of prophecy." He feels the solution to the relationship, especially in Jeremiah, is to be found in seeing suffering as divine discipline.<sup>30</sup> The key to the problem, he thinks, is in the word mûsâr, "discipline." Jeremiah knew that the downfall of the nation was inevitable; yet his big task was to get the people to accept this as Yahweh's means of disciplining them. Blank's statement sums up this view of mûsâr:

As employed by the prophets and especially, among them, by Jeremiah, the word mûsâr is a technical term; it means a calamity, visited by God upon a person or a nation, a calamity which, if humbly accepted and correctly interpreted, may serve as a lesson and from which, if the lesson is learned, salvation may result.<sup>31</sup>

The calamity tears away the concentric circles of falsehood which surround the heart and enables the people, with this falsehood cut away, to meet God anew. "God smites his people in order to draw them to him. When

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<sup>30</sup>Jim Alvin Sanders, Suffering as Divine Discipline in the Old Testament and Post-Biblical Judaism, special issue in Colgate Rochester Divinity School Bulletin (Rochester, New York: Colgate Rochester Divinity School, [1955]), XXVIII, 64ff.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

they experience the smiting quite naturally they seek some cure for the wound."<sup>32</sup> The people are not able to repent by themselves; therefore God sends them into exile in order to discipline them. "If Jeremiah had had any hope that the people would repent he has abandoned it. His only hope now rests in the effect of the calamity and the manner in which the people accept it."<sup>33</sup> The discipline was, in effect, God's method of giving the people new hearts so that they could know him (cf. 31:33-34). Sanders defines this process more closely:

The desert conditions caused by the havoc wrought by the Babylonian forces may be pictured as a bottleneck. Only what is true in the religion of Israel can find its way through the ruins. . . . All falsehood must be relinquished and left behind. The heart of the people stripped of its plumpness passes into the desert once more and stands naked before its God. In this way and this way only may the people regain da'ath 'elōhîm, necessary to the covenant relationship. . . . If their heart is now naked, that is, if their mind has shed its false hopes, its wayward thinking, it can now come into a relation of da'ath 'elōhîm, seeing God as He appears to them again.<sup>34</sup>

Other scholars likewise take this view of the relationship between judgment and salvation in Jeremiah; the judgment is the means of salvation because it causes the people to respond properly to Yahweh. Nötscher speaks of a "geläuterte Schar" which will be saved out of the judgment:

Durch das Gericht bereitet sich Jahwe das Volk, das Träger der messianischen Verheissungen werden. . . . Das Strafgericht wird auch nach Jeremia zur Pforte, durch welche Israel in das Gottesreich

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<sup>32</sup>Jim Alvin Sanders, The Old Testament in the Cross (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1961), pp. 92ff. Cf. also Sanders, Suffering as Divine Discipline in the Old Testament and Post-Biblical Judaism, pp. 47-53, 65-67; he states (p. 53), "God must smite the heart of the people and shock them to their senses."

<sup>33</sup>Sanders, Suffering as Divine Discipline in the Old Testament and Post-Biblical Judaism, p. 61.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., pp. 62-64, 53, 77.

der Zukunft eintritt, dass Jahwes Gnade gründen wird. Im Gericht macht Jahwe das Herz des Volkes empfänglich für seine Lehre und sein Wort.<sup>35</sup>

Jeremiah knew, according to Leslie, that the judgment had to come on this rebellious nation, "but perhaps even by the catastrophe itself Judah's responsiveness would be awakened."<sup>36</sup> What this view does, in effect, is to provide a bridge between judgment and salvation; the discipline incurred in the judgment leads the people to repent and thus brings them salvation. The tension between judgment and grace is resolved, for the two are in essence the same thing: "Judgment is salvation."<sup>37</sup> Weiser also finds that, in seeing judgment as discipline, the resolution of the relationship between Yahweh's righteousness and his grace is found:

Um seiner Gerechtigkeit willen konnte Gott die Sünde des Volkes nicht ungestraft hingehen lassen; sein grundlegender Wille zum Heil ist dadurch jedoch nicht aufgehoben, so dass das Gericht nicht Gottes letztes Wort bedeutet, sondern als "Züchtigung," d.h. als Durchgangspunkt aufgefasst wird auf dem Weg zu Gottes Heil. In der Erzieherischen Tendenz des göttlichen Heilswillens findet die Spannung zwischen der Gnade und Gerechtigkeit ihren Ausgleich.<sup>38</sup>

To a certain extent, this view of the relationship between judgment

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<sup>35</sup>Friedrich Nötscher, Die Gerechtigkeit Gottes bei den vorexilischen Propheten (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1915), p. 115.

<sup>36</sup>Leslie, op. cit., p. 192. Cf. also Julian Morgenstern, "The Book of the Covenant. Part III--the Huggim," Hebrew Union College Annual, VIII-IX (1931-32), 4-5, who thinks the judgment was "for discipline and correction and spiritual regeneration"; and Smith, op. cit., p. 237, who thinks the exile was for the sifting of the nation.

<sup>37</sup>This is the often repeated theme of Sander's book, The Old Testament in the Cross, passim.

<sup>38</sup>Artur Weiser, Das Buch des Propheten Jeremia: Kapitel 25:15-52:34, in Das Alte Testament Deutsch, edited by Volkmar Hertrich and Artur Weiser (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1952), XXI, 279.

and salvation does indeed reflect Jeremiah's theology. He lived in a time when the northern kingdom (his homeland, 1:1) had disappeared in exile, and he saw, both in prophecy and in fact, the destruction of Judah and her exile. Whatever hopes that may have been attached to Judah as the continuation of Israel and bearer of the promises had to be dispelled. Yet the nation would continue its existence even in exile, and Jeremiah was convinced that Yahweh would bring them back once again in fulfillment of his purpose. Therefore he could proclaim the judgment as part of God's plan for salvation; he could say that God's judgment was ultimately in the service of his grace. So Sanders and the other scholars mentioned above are right insofar as they speak of God's judgment as part of his activity in bringing about the ultimate salvation of his people. God does indeed smite his people in order that he may heal them; he strips them naked before himself so that he may show grace to them.

However, Jeremiah makes no attempt to resolve the tension between the judging and the saving activity of Yahweh. Yahweh tears down and plucks up, he builds up and plants; both activities are juxtaposed without any lessening of the full impact of either. Sanders recognizes that God's judgment cuts the people to the quick; however, he makes the response of the people to this "discipline" the all-important factor in their salvation: "His great hope was that they would understand the calamity as from God and accept it as a sword to cut away all that prevented their knowing God completely."<sup>39</sup> It is not true, however, that Jeremiah

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<sup>39</sup>Sanders, Suffering as Divine Discipline in the Old Testament and Post-Biblical Judaism, p. 77.

looks upon the coming destruction and exile as "discipline" which will make it possible for Israel to respond anew to Yahweh. To be sure, Jeremiah does make considerable use of the verb yāsar ("discipline") and the corresponding noun mūsār. However, in almost every case the noun mūsār is used to document the people's inability to repent: "In vain have I smitten your children, they took no discipline" (mūsār, 2:30). Instead of making the people repent, Yahweh's discipline makes their hearts grow even harder:

You have smitten them,  
 but they felt no anguish;  
 you have consumed them,  
 but they refused to take correction (mūsār).  
 They have made their faces harder than rock;  
 they have refused to repent (5:3).

The word mūsār is used in a similar way in 17:23; 32:33; 35:13; 7:28 (in 10:8 occurs the difficult phrase, "the mūsār of idols is but wood"). In only one case could mūsār possibly refer to discipline intended by the exile (30:14); however, the parallelism makes it plain that it is simply synonymous with destruction without any idea of discipline:

For with the blow of an enemy I have smitten you,  
 with the punishment (mūsār) of a merciless foe,  
 because of the greatness of your guilt,  
 because your sins are flagrant.  
 Why do you cry out over your hurt?  
 your pain is incurable.

The mūsār obviously is intended not for correction but as incurable destruction. The verb yāsar is used by Jeremiah in a personal prayer for direction (10:24) and to describe the people's punishment of being left in their sins (2:19). In 30:11 Yahweh says he will chasten (yissartî) the people in just measure; but it is clear that this is not intended as discipline: "Your hurt is incurable . . . there is no healing

for you" (30:12-13). One use of yāsar does indeed indicate Ephraim is being brought to repentance by the exile (31:18-19); however, this is an idealized confession in the context of Yahweh's restoration of the northern kingdom and thus has nothing to do with understanding Judah's destruction and exile as discipline.

Therefore it may be concluded that Jeremiah did not conceive of Yahweh's judgment of destruction on Judah (and Israel) as a disciplinary process which would bring them to repentance and new life. The hearts of the people were completely hardened, and no discipline could bring about their repentance. As Skinner says,

For him there was no "remnant" in Isaiah's sense--no seed, that is, of the future in any part of the nation, nothing capable of carrying forward the religious heritage of the past into the perfect religion of the latter days. It had been his mission to test and try every section of society by the word of the Lord, and he had found nought but "refuse silver," rejected of Yahwe (6:30). . . . the whole fabric of the nation's life was worthless for the ends of God's kingdom.<sup>40</sup>

There is no bridge between judgment and salvation in the form of the people's repentance brought about by discipline. The wind of destruction comes "not to winnow or cleanse," but it is Yahweh speaking in judgment (4:11-12), and his anger burns forever (15:14; 17:4). There has been a decree of divorce (3:8); those going off into exile shall no more return to their native land (22:10; 27:10), and therefore they shall prefer death to life (8:3).

The fact that Jeremiah proclaimed the hope of a return from exile for the people of Israel does not mean that he conceived of a continuity between judgment and salvation within the people themselves. It is true,

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<sup>40</sup>Op. cit., pp. 267-68.

of course, that the people who returned from exile would be Israelites; there would be, on the surface, a racial continuity. However, there are two important factors in Jeremiah's proclamation of salvation which show that the return from exile will not soften the radical break brought about by the judgment. First, the return from exile would not take place for seventy years (29:10). The theological significance of this period of time is that it preserves the complete break caused by the judgment: no one who went into exile would return. The nation dies in the judgment before it is brought to life again in the restoration. Secondly, most of Jeremiah's oracles of salvation are addressed to the northern kingdom of Israel, or to both Israel and Judah (cf. 3:12ff.; 16:15; 23:6; and most of the book of consolation, chaps. 30-31). The northern kingdom had been destroyed and exiled well over a century by Jeremiah's time. Surely he realized the impossibility of a physical continuity with respect to its restoration. The nation had died and could be restored only by a new act of creation.

From the above discussion it is manifest that Jeremiah makes no attempt to resolve the tension between his task of tearing down and his commission to build up. He proclaims unmitigated judgment which will bring a complete break in the destruction of Israel, and at the same time he proclaims full, creative grace which will bring about salvation for the people of Israel.

Auf reumütige Zerknirschung lässt sich die Zukunft einer neuen Gemeinde des Heils nicht aufbauen. Trotz aller Züchtigung, aller Sehnsucht der Rückkehr und Umkehr, allem Locken der Besten bleibt ein Rest von Widerstreben auch im geldüterten Volk. Und so erhebt sich Jeremia zu einem völlig neuen, grossen Gedanken. Die Gewissheit des Heils muss von dem menschlichen Tun losgelöst werden; Gott

selbst und Gott allein gibt die Bürgschaft: er wirft neuen Menschen-  
samen aus und schafft ein neues Menschengeschlecht.<sup>41</sup>

The salvation which Jeremiah proclaims comes completely from God's side; he will create a new covenant in which he will give to his people a new heart so that they will be able to know him. The proclamation of this unconditional grace, however, does not take away in the least from the fierceness of the judgment. On the contrary, the judgment must be total so that the grace may be total. "Yahweh's word brings not peace, but a sword--the sword that cuts like a surgeon's knife to the seat of the malignant cancer and makes possible a deep inward healing."<sup>42</sup> Thus the word of judgment and the word of grace--so contradictory to human logic--have their unity in the divine activity designed to bring to completion the purpose of God with his people. This unity has its basis in the nature of God, as both his love and his wrath go into action in a struggle within God himself, a struggle which is revealed momentarily in some of the deepest passages in prophetic literature (Hos. 11:8; Jer. 31:20). Since Jeremiah's preaching includes both judgment and grace, it is Christuszeugnis, according to Hertrich:

In Christus wird das Ziel aller Gerichtspredigt offenbar. Darum muss das Gericht in seinem furchtbaren, unausweichlichen Ernst verkündigt werden, darum muss die Geschichte des Alten Bundes eine Geschichte des fort und fort sich vollziehenden Gerichtes Gottes

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<sup>41</sup>Volz, op. cit., p. 49. Cf. also Lods, op. cit., p. 170; Bright, op. cit., pp. 318-19, who says, "The awful chasm between the demands of Yahweh's covenant, by which the nation had been judged, and his sure promises, which faith could not surrender, was bridged from the side of the divine grace." Cf. also Norman H. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament (London: The Epworth Press, 1944), p. 121.

<sup>42</sup>Bernard W. Anderson, Understanding the Old Testament (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1957), pp. 332-33, 354.

sein, weil am Kreuz das Gericht zu seinem letzten, furchtbarsten Vollzug kommt. Darum aber muss vielmehr unter dem Nein des Gerichts in der Geschichte des Alten Bundes fort und fort das Ja der Gnade verkündigt werden, weil am Kreuz mitten im Nein des Gerichts Gottes Ja zur Welt offenbar wird. Die Furchtbarkeit des Gerichtes muss zuletzt zeugen von der Schrankenlosigkeit der Gnade.<sup>43</sup>

It remains to demonstrate in detail from Jeremiah's oracle of salvation that the salvation he is proclaiming has its basis in Yahweh's activity in both judgment and grace.

In several symbolic actions Jeremiah demonstrated that Yahweh works in both judgment and grace for the salvation of his people. Once Yahweh told him to use the potter at his wheel as a visual aid in his preaching (18:1ff.). The vessel the potter was making was spoiled, but he reshaped it into another vessel, "as it seemed good to the potter to do." Yahweh's word came to Jeremiah, with the potter as an illustration: "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? says Yahweh. Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel" (18:5). That Yahweh respects the freedom of his people is shown in the following verses (18:7ff.). But he will not let the freedom of Israel frustrate the divine purpose of salvation; for Yahweh is able to destroy and to create anew. As Skinner says,

Israel is in the hands of an omnipotent and gracious God, whose inflexible justice compels Him to crush to the dust the pride of

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<sup>43</sup>Op. cit., p. 57. For the unity of divine action in judgment and grace cf. also Nötscher, op. cit., p. 116; Skinner, op. cit., pp. 75ff.; John Bright, The Kingdom of God: The Biblical Concept and Its Meaning for the Church (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953), p. 122, who says that here was a religion that could "encompass all of history's tragedy in its framework" and "go down to the very depths of the hell of tragedy," without being extinguished itself.

the old Israel--the "worthless vessel" (Hos. 8:8)--but who will out of its ruin create a new people of God, formed for Himself to set forth His praise.<sup>44</sup>

A second Gleichnishandlung by which Jeremiah proclaimed the unity of Yahweh's judgment and grace is recorded in 32:6-44. This incident took place in the tenth year of King Zedekiah (587 B. C.), when the city was under Babylonian siege and only a matter of time away from complete destruction. "At a time when a people--whose capacity for wishful thinking was amazing--had had all hope snatched away, Jeremiah, who never had any hope, never ceased to hope."<sup>45</sup> It was an indomitable faith in God that caused Jeremiah to use his right of possession and redemption and buy a field in Anathoth from his cousin Hanamel--a field that was in the possession of the Babylonian army. H. W. Robinson likens Jeremiah's deed to the incident when a Roman bought, at an undiminished price, a field on which Hannibal was encamped.<sup>46</sup> Jeremiah went through the complete legal process: he weighed out seventeen shekels of silver, signed the deed, sealed it, and got witnesses to sign it. The whole transaction was carried out in the presence of all the Jews who were sitting in the court of the guard, where Jeremiah was being held captive. He gave both the sealed deed and the open deed to Baruch and charged him to place them in

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<sup>44</sup>Op. cit., p. 164. Cf. also Leslie, op. cit., p. 193, who says, "After the marring of the clay, i.e., the destruction of Judah, had taken place, the nation was to be effectively reconciled to him and made over into a new people of God."

<sup>45</sup>Bright, The Kingdom of God: The Biblical Concept and Its Meaning for the Church, p. 124.

<sup>46</sup>H. W. Robinson, The Cross in the Old Testament (London: S. C. M. Press, Ltd., 1955), p. 153. The story is told in Livy, 26, 11.

an earthenware vessel where they would be safe for a long time. All these elaborate preparations were designed to bring home the unbelievable message: "Thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel: 'houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land'" (32:15). This message was unbelievable even for Jeremiah, for he saw the inconsistency between the doom-bound present and the hopeful future. The city was being given into the hands of the Babylonians in accordance with God's judgment; but why this hopeful sign? (32:16-25). Yahweh's answer does nothing to resolve the tension between the judgment and the word of promise; the unity is simply based within the mysterious purpose of God: "Is anything too hard for me?" (32:27). The tearing down and the building up stand side by side. On the one hand, the judgment is not to be mitigated: "This city has aroused my anger and wrath, from the day it was built to this day, so that I will remove it from my sight" (32:31). But, on the other hand, the divine grace will bring complete salvation: "Just as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so I will bring upon them all the good that I promise them. Fields shall be bought . . . ; for I will restore their fortunes" (32:42-44). Even as the judgment will be complete, so also the salvation will be complete; Yahweh will create a new people and give them a new heart so that they will never turn away from him:

Now therefore thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, about this city of which you say, "It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword, by famine, and by pestilence": "Behold, I will gather them from all the lands to which I drove them in my anger and in my fury and in my great wrath; and I will return them to this place, and I will make them dwell in safety. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. And I will give them one heart and one way, so that they may fear me forever, that it may be well with them and with their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing good to them; and I

will put the fear of me in their hearts, so that they will not turn aside from me. I will rejoice in doing good to them, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and with all my soul" (32:36-41).<sup>47</sup>

The message of these two symbolic actions is borne out by other oracles of salvation which Jeremiah uttered. In chapter 3, after documenting the guilt of both the northern kingdom and Judah, which resulted in a decree of divorce (3:6-11), Yahweh calls first of all on the northern kingdom to return: "Return, faithless Israel, says Yahweh; I will not look on you in anger, for I am merciful, says Yahweh" (3:12). The invitation is broadened to include also Judah, seen in the eye of prophecy as already destroyed and exiled (3:14). However, the return is not left up to human devices; Yahweh himself will step in and take them, bring them back to Zion, provide for faithful rulers, and recreate the people so that they will no more follow their stubborn hearts. The new era of salvation will be so glorious that the ark, the symbol of the old covenant, will no longer be remembered (3:14b-18).<sup>48</sup> Yahweh does not discount the faithlessness of his people; he feels the sorrow of a father whose daughter refuses to accept the gift of an inheritance alongside his sons and

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<sup>47</sup>Weiser, *op. cit.*, XXI, 308, considers 32:37-41 later, since it seems to be based on the new covenant passage, 31:31-34. This is hardly a valid reason for deleting it; it certainly contains Jeremian theology.

<sup>48</sup>This passage (3:15-18) and other so-called prose sermons of Jeremiah have been disputed by scholars. John Bright, "The Date of the Prose Sermons of Jeremiah," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXX (1951), 15-35, examines them in detail and finds that they constitute a unity with no evidence of a post-exilic date. Bright does not argue that they give the *ipsissima verba* of Jeremiah, but the prose tradition "grew up on the basis of his words, partly no doubt preserving them exactly, partly giving the gist of them with verbal expansions, partly (e.g. 17:19-27) those words as understood or misunderstood in the circle of his disciples."

fails to call him by the desired title, "my father" (3:19-20). Yet, in an obvious play on the word šûb, Yahweh binds up judgment and grace in one unit; he has destroyed his people, but he will recreate them and heal their very sinful nature which brought about the judgment:

šûbû bānîm šôbābîm

šerpâ mešûbôtêkem

Return, O faithless sons,

I will heal your faithlessness (3:22).

Weiser says with regard to this passage:

Dieses allen menschlichen Erwartungen widerstreitende Wunder behält sich Gott vor, dass der Mensch nicht auf die Möglichkeiten seiner eigenen Macht baut, sondern sich ganz an die göttliche Gnade gewiesen weiss, die schon darin am Werke ist, dass überhaupt ein Rest übrig bleibt, den Gott mitten im Zusammenbruch zu einem neuen Anfang in der Geschichte seines Heils ausersehen hat.<sup>49</sup>

One of the few passages in Jeremiah which might be classified as "messianic"<sup>50</sup> is 23:1-8. In this passage Yahweh promises to gather his people out of all the countries where he has driven them; he will raise up a righteous branch as a faithful ruler, whose name will be a confession of faith: "Yahweh is our righteousness" (23:6). This is all brought about by Yahweh's decisive act of salvation. Yet it in no way eases the harshness of the judgment; rather, it presupposes the judgment. The era of the Davidic kingdom is at an end (22:24-30); it is Yahweh himself who will make the radical break in history (23:1-3). Yet the word of

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<sup>49</sup>Op. cit., XX, 30.

<sup>50</sup>Jeremiah, in contrast with Isaiah, paints the future in subdued colors, with the "messiah" a just and pious ruler. Cf. Skinner, op. cit., pp. 310-19; Welch, op. cit., p. 232; Kuhl, op. cit., p. 118; and Masao Sekine, "Davidsbund und Sinaibund bei Jeremia," Vetus Testamentum, IX (1959), 51ff., who thinks Jeremiah said little about the messiah because he was more concerned with the covenant of Sinai than with the Davidic covenant.

salvation is bound up with the word of judgment:

Die Heilsgeschichte Gottes geht weiter; sie endigt nicht im Negativen, sondern steuert einem positiven Ziel zu. Zwar bedeutet sie für das gegenwärtige Königsgeschlecht das Gericht; aber Gericht ist nicht das letzte Wort Gottes in der Geschichte seines Heils.<sup>51</sup>

As a result of Yahweh's new creative act of salvation the exodus from Egypt will be forgotten in favor of the new exodus. But even the new confession of faith recognizes the unity of divine action in judgment and grace: "As Yahweh lives who brought up . . . Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them" (23:8).<sup>52</sup> Through destruction and recreation comes salvation.

After King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon had taken some of the people of Judah into exile in 597 B. C., Jeremiah spoke words of promise to these exiles of the first deportation (chap. 24; 29:1-14). Here again the word of judgment and the word of grace combine in God's purpose for his people. The message of promise for the exiles is at the same time a word of judgment on those remaining in Jerusalem; they are the bad figs, while the exiles are the good figs (24:4-10; cf. 29:16-19). It is not that Jeremiah has transferred his hope for the future to the purified remnant now in exile.<sup>53</sup> Rather, he understands the unity of God's acting both in judgment and in grace; the judgment has come for the exiles, but it is still to come for those remaining in Jerusalem. Since he has

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<sup>51</sup>Weiser, *op. cit.*, XX, 195-98.

<sup>52</sup>The passage 23:7-8 is used also in 16:14-15, where it is set in the midst of an oracle of harsh judgment. There also it does not soften the judgment; rather, the "therefore" establishes it.

<sup>53</sup>So, e.g., Herbert Dittmann, "Der heilige Rest im Alten Testament," *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*, LXXXVII (1914), 615; R. de Vaux, "Le 'reste d'Israël' d'après les prophètes," *Revue Biblique*, XLII (1933), 534.

performed his work of tearing down and plucking up on the exiles, now Yahweh can say:

I will set my eyes upon them for good, and I will return them to this land. And I will build them up, and I will not tear them down; I will plant them, and I will not pluck them up. I will give them a heart to know me, that I am Yahweh. And they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart (24:6-7).

It is the creative grace of God, which is at work in the midst of his judgment, which plants and builds up the people, creating for them a new heart so that the covenant formula can be spoken once again. Even for the exiles, however, the word of promise is not without its side of judgment. The restoration will come--but only after a period of seventy years (29:10), a relative amount of time assuring a complete break brought about by the judgment.

The oracle in chapter 33 indicates that, also for those still in Jerusalem, salvation will come through the divine activity in both judgment and grace. Yahweh is smiting the city in his anger and wrath so that it will become a waste; but he will also bring it health and healing, recreating it so it will truly be a joy, praise and glory to him (33:5-9; cf. 13:11). Both the judgment and the grace are in Yahweh's purpose, as sure as his covenant with the day and the night (33:19ff.).

There remains the great collection of oracles of hope in the so-called book of consolation (chaps. 30-31). Yahweh told Jeremiah to write these oracles in a book in view of the coming restoration (30:2). These oracles contain the full tension between judgment and grace, summed up in the statement that might well stand as the motto of the whole book of consolation (30:7):

Alas, for that day is so great,  
 there is none like it;  
 it is a time of tribulation for Jacob,  
 and out of it he shall be saved (ûimmennâ yiwwâšēa).

"That day" points to the whole range of God's activity with his people in carrying through his purpose, that unique divine activity which has the inner tension as well as the inner unity of judgment and grace. Therefore "that day" is a dialectical one, for "die 'Notzeit' Jakobs ist die Krisis zum Heil!"<sup>54</sup> It is precisely in the midst of judgment that salvation comes for the people of Israel, and this theme is carried through the book of consolation.

It is true that some scholars find little in these two chapters that Jeremiah wrote; Skinner says that it is "not credible that he wrote this book in the form in which we now have it."<sup>55</sup> However, the whole book of consolation fits so well into Jeremiah's theology that it may be considered authentic.<sup>56</sup> Whether these oracles stem from the end of Jeremiah's career or from his early years,<sup>57</sup> the message is essentially the same one

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<sup>54</sup>Weiser, op. cit., XXI, 277.

<sup>55</sup>Op. cit., pp. 300-01; he finds that the only genuine oracles are 31:2-6, 15-16, 18-20, 21-22. Welch, op. cit., pp. 226ff., regards the only authentic passages to be 30:18-22; 31:18-20, 23-25, 27-34. Volz, op. cit., p. 48; and Leslie, op. cit., p. 94, think Jeremiah was speaking only to the northern kingdom and therefore delete all references to Judah.

<sup>56</sup>Cf. Hans Schmidt, Die Grossen Propheten, 2. Abteilung in Die Schriften des Alten Testaments in Auswahl neu übersetzt und für die Gegenwart erklärt (Zweite Auflage; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1921), II, 358; and Weiser, op. cit., XXI, 273-75, who points out that the whole people of God are seen as a unit in the new covenant.

<sup>57</sup>Skinner, op. cit., p. 303 (cf. pp. 277-79), thinks Jeremiah spoke these oracles during his stay with Gedaliah after Jerusalem's destruction, thinking the little remnant that was left would be the nucleus of the new people of God; Weiser, op. cit., XXI, 275, places these oracles in Jeremiah's early career, as a corrective to the people's false hopes.

that was revealed to him at his call: Yahweh tears down and builds up his people.

In the oracle 30:12-17 one of Jeremiah's favorite metaphors is used, that of wounding and healing. Because of the people's sins, Yahweh has dealt them the blow of an enemy. Although there was balm in Gilead (cf. 8:22), no healing ointment could cure this wound, for it was Yahweh's own terrible judgment:

Your hurt is incurable,  
and your wound is great.  
There is none to uphold your cause,  
no medicine for your wound,  
no healing for you (30:12-13; cf. 14:19).

Yet, completely unexpectedly, the one who has smitten them becomes their healer: "I will restore health to you, and your wounds I will heal" (30:17). It is Yahweh's full judgment and his complete grace that make possible the reaffirmation of the covenant formula: "And you shall be my people, and I will be your God" (30:22).<sup>58</sup>

The oracle in 30:23-31:6 begins with "the storm of Yahweh" which goes forth against his people. "The fierce anger of Yahweh will not turn back until he has executed and accomplished the intents of his mind" (30:23-24; cf. 23:19-20). But then without warning Yahweh is at work in grace in the midst of the judgment:

The people who survived the sword  
found grace (hen) in the wilderness;  
when Israel sought for rest,  
Yahweh appeared to him (lô for lî) from afar.  
With an everlasting love I have loved you;  
therefore I have prolonged my steadfast love to you.  
Again I will build you, and you shall be built (31:2-4a).

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<sup>58</sup>Cf. Weiser, op. cit., XXI, 279ff.

This oracle does not simply refer to the people of Judah going into exile;<sup>59</sup> the place references are predominately to the northern kingdom (31:5,6,9,15,18,20). It is clear in 31:1 that the whole people of Israel is involved in this new covenant: "At that time, says Yahweh, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people" (cf. also 31:27,31). The "wilderness" is the judgment of God on his people, both in 722 B. C. and in 587 B. C. But in the midst of this judgment Yahweh's steadfast love causes him to recreate his people and bring them back in a new exodus (31:8-9). His father-love for Israel never fades, even when he punishes them (31:9). He works both in judgment and in grace to accomplish his purpose: "He who scattered Israel will gather him" (31:10).

The judgment Yahweh brings on Israel is very bitter. Jeremiah, drawing on sacred traditions of his homeland, graphically speaks of Rachel weeping for her children that are not.<sup>60</sup> Yet Yahweh tells her to stop her weeping, for "there is hope for your future" (31:15-17). That hope is based completely in God's unsearchable mercy; for even as he speaks his word of judgment against Ephraim, he remembers that Ephraim is his darling child (yeled ša'asū'îm). In a conflict within Yahweh's heart that is only briefly hinted at, Yahweh's gracious purpose for his people is the victor, and he issues the decree of salvation: "Therefore my heart

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<sup>59</sup>It is understood in this way by Sanders, The Old Testament in the Cross, pp. 96-97; and Weiser, op. cit., XXI, 283. Leslie, op. cit., p. 100, understands it to mean the exile of the northern kingdom.

<sup>60</sup>Skinner, op. cit., pp. 305-08, offers the interesting suggestion that Jeremiah, being released at Ramah (40:1) from the gang of prisoners going to Babylon, is reflecting the actual laments he heard at that time.

yearns (hāmû) for him; I must have mercy (rahēm ṣarahamennû)<sup>61</sup> on him" (31:20). It is God's activity of both judgment and grace that brings about salvation for his people. This is summed up in one statement:

And it shall come to pass that as I have watched over them to pluck up and to break down, to overthrow, destroy and bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says Yahweh (31:28).

God is at work, carrying out his purpose (cf. 1:10-12) by destroying and recreating.<sup>62</sup>

The climax of the book of consolation is reached with the new covenant oracle in 31:31-34. There is nothing in this oracle that Jeremiah has not proclaimed elsewhere, but now he brings all his central ideas together.<sup>63</sup> This passage spells out Yahweh's activity in judgment and grace to carry out his purpose of salvation for his people:

Behold, the days are coming, says Yahweh, when I will make a new covenant (b'erit hadāšā) with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers. . . . I will put my law within them, and upon their hearts I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, "Know Yahweh"; for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest; for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no longer.

This oracle says very clearly that Yahweh works in judgment; the fact that there would be a new covenant meant that the old covenant was to be destroyed in judgment. The promise that Yahweh would give the people new

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<sup>61</sup>Cf. Leslie, *op. cit.*, p. 105, who translates this phrase: "I must deal with him in boundless compassion."

<sup>62</sup>On this passage cf. Weiser, *op. cit.*, XXI, 292.

<sup>63</sup>Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 378. Skinner, *op. cit.*, pp. 321-27, shows in great detail that the covenant and its related sphere of thought were very central in Jeremiah's whole message.

hearts (cf. Ez. 36:26) meant that the old hearts must be destroyed in the fire of judgment. But precisely here is the great wonder, "dass es mitten im Nein das grosse Ja Gottes gibt."<sup>64</sup> God steps in and creates a new people with new hearts, a people who will fully respond to Yahweh's loving mercy. The passage is determinedly theocentric; God is at the beginning, middle and end as he destroys and recreates.<sup>65</sup> Now there comes to pass what Moses could only wish (Num. 11:29): all God's people are prophets, for they each know God and have his will written on their hearts.<sup>66</sup> They will stand in that relationship to Yahweh which only his prophets enjoy, for they too will have experienced death and rebirth (cf. Is. 6:5-7).

Thus Jeremiah proclaims salvation in judgment. There is nothing to ease the tension between these two seemingly contradictory activities of God. They stand side by side, having their unity in the unsearchable purpose of God for the ultimate salvation of his people. The tension must exist in the heart of God himself, and there only is it resolved.

#### The Passion of the Prophet Jeremiah

The personal life and emotion of Jeremiah are recorded in much greater detail than is the case with any of the other prophets. There

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<sup>64</sup>Hertrich, op. cit., pp. 52-54; cf. Gerhard von Rad, Theologie des alten Testaments (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1960), II, 284; Volz, op. cit., p. 50; and Skinner, op. cit., p. 327.

<sup>65</sup>Cf. Emil Balla, Die Botschaft der Propheten, edited by Georg Fohrer (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1958), p. 275; von Rad, op. cit., pp. 225, 279ff.; Hertrich, op. cit., p. 51; Volz, op. cit., pp. 29-50; and P. van Imschoot, Theologie de L'Ancien Testament (Tournai, Belgium: Desclée & Co., 1954), pp. 256ff.

<sup>66</sup>Sanders, Suffering as Divine Discipline in the Old Testament and Post-Biblical Judaism, p. 74.

is a good reason for this. For Jeremiah was invited to have a share in the divine activity of tearing down and building up (1:10); this meant that in his own activity as he proclaimed Yahweh's word he would be a reflection of Yahweh's activity with his people. In his personal suffering, his emotions of wrath and love, his desire to build up and his compulsion to tear down, Jeremiah bears witness to the nature of God. His own suffering love, based on his divinely given commission, bears testimony to the suffering love of Yahweh (cf. 45:3-4).

Jeremiah was a man taken up completely into the divine counsel and purpose. Before his birth Yahweh had put his stamp on him (1:5), and his objections were overcome by the power of Yahweh's word (1:6-8). Yahweh's hand placed his word in Jeremiah's mouth, and Jeremiah ate it (1:9; 15:16). This word became like a fire shut up in his bones, and he was compelled to proclaim it (20:9).<sup>67</sup> Likewise, his whole existence was under the demanding direction of his office as Yahweh's personal representative. Hertzberg remarks, "Er hat das innere Leben eines unter dem urgewaltigen Eindruck des göttlichen stehenden Menschen, eines ganz von Gott Gefassten, eines Propheten empfunden und gelebt."<sup>68</sup> In his intense solidarity with Yahweh he had to refrain from marriage (16:1ff.), to withdraw from fellowship with the people (16:5ff.), and to deliver messages to the people by symbolic actions (13:1ff.; 18:1ff.; 32:6ff.). He stood in the council of Yahweh (23:18), and his human life was shattered by Yahweh's holy words (23:9). Yahweh was stronger than Jeremiah and overcame him (20:7). Here

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<sup>67</sup>Buber, *op. cit.*, pp. 164, 180; Hertzberg, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

<sup>68</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 234, 213. Cf. Weiser, *op. cit.*, XX, 171.

Jeremiah uses the legal terms for the seduction and forcing of a woman (pātaḥ and ḥāzaq): God has violated his inner sense of personal freedom in taking him so completely into his service.<sup>69</sup> Jeremiah's sense of solidarity with Yahweh's mind and purpose is so complete that the distinction between Yahweh's word and his own word fades.<sup>70</sup> In many oracles it is difficult to determine whether it is Yahweh or Jeremiah who is speaking (e.g., 4:19-22; 5:31; 8:18-9:2; 10:19-21; 12:7-13). Jeremiah's thoughts and emotions have merged with Yahweh's; through his divine ordination his prophetic sympathy with the divine pathos is such that no sharp distinction is needed between the oracle of Yahweh and his own outbursts of feeling. As Knight remarks,

The supreme importance of the divine pathos in the prophetic vision of God is illustrated by the emotional solidarity which binds the prophet to his God. The emotional consciousness of the prophet is a dim earthly reflection of the emotions which Yahwe experiences in heaven.<sup>71</sup>

Jeremiah also had a strong sense of solidarity with the people of Israel. He stood completely on Yahweh's side by divine compulsion, but

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<sup>69</sup>Cf. Harold Knight, The Hebrew Prophetic Consciousness (London: Lutterworth Press, 1947), p. 140.

<sup>70</sup>So von Rad, op. cit., p. 204; and Aubrey R. Johnson, The One and the Many in the Israelite Conception of God (Second edition; Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1961), p. 36. But Hertzberg, op. cit., pp. 93ff., 160, thinks that Jeremiah made a sharp distinction between his own words and Yahweh's word.

<sup>71</sup>Knight, op. cit., p. 139. Cf. also Smith, op. cit., pp. 345, 361; Hertrich, op. cit., pp. 43-44; Joseph M. Gettys, Hark to the Trumpet: The Message of the Prophets for the World of Today (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1948), pp. 125-26; Lewis Bayles Paton, "The Problem of Suffering in the Pre-exilic Prophets," Journal of Biblical Literature, XLVI (1927), 126, who states that the prophets were Yahweh's servants "who were sharing with him in a sacrificial ministry for the redemption of Israel."

at the same time he was one with the people to whom he was proclaiming Yahweh's word of razing and building. "Bei Jeremia meldet sich ein Gefühl der Solidarität mit dem bedrohten Volk und auch mit dem bedrohten Land."<sup>72</sup> He prayed for his people even when Yahweh had forbidden him to do so (14:11ff.); he felt one with the people in suffering the coming judgment (6:22-26; 8:14; 9:16ff.). His love for the people caused him to run back and forth from the small to the great seeking someone who did justice (5:4ff.). The destruction of "my people" (ammi) caused him terrific anguish and many bitter tears (5:31; 4:19-26; 8:18-22; 13:17; 14:17-18). Jeremiah's solidarity with the people was so strong that he chided Yahweh for deceiving the people (4:10) and questioned his rejection of Judah (14:19ff.). "Er selbst steht auch auf der Seite der Sünder, sein Mund ist nicht Mund Gottes, auch sein Mund bringt Lästerung gegen Gott empor."<sup>73</sup>

But Jeremiah did not only suffer with the people; he also suffered for them. In a sense his suffering was a substitutionary suffering, in that he fulfilled in himself the tearing down and building up that had to become real for the whole people. Hertrich remarks, "Der Prophet steht stellvertretend vor Gott für sein Volk. . . . So wird nun die ganz persönliche Glaubenserfahrung des Propheten zum Zeugnis dafür, wie Gott mit

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<sup>72</sup>von Rad, op. cit., pp. 207-08. See also Gerhard von Rad, "Die Konfessionen Jeremias," Evangelische Theologie, [III] (July, 1936), 269-70; Bright, The Kingdom of God: the Biblical Concept and Its Meaning for the Church, p. 119; and Hertzberg, op. cit., pp. 141-47.

<sup>73</sup>Hertrich, op. cit., p. 35; cf. Bright, The Kingdom of God: the Biblical Concept and Its Meaning for the Church, p. 118, who says that "Jeremiah did not hesitate to hurl at his God the bluntest accusations of unfairness."

seinem Volk handeln will."<sup>74</sup> Jeremiah himself experienced what it meant to have an incurable wound (15:18); he himself felt the terrifying judgment of Yahweh's holy word when it confronts sinful men (23:9; cf. Is. 6:5). But he also experienced the renewing and recreating power of Yahweh's grace (15:19-21; 17:14). In him, as a representative of the people, Yahweh's saving activity in both judgment and grace was realized.<sup>75</sup> It is precisely because he not only feels a solidarity with Yahweh's purpose and will but also stands on the side of the people in experiencing judgment that Jeremiah can fulfill his ministry to Israel. Hertrich says, "Weil der Prophet über seinem eigenen Leben gerade im Nein am deutlichsten das Ja Gottes gehört hat, darum muss er nun in aller Gerichtspredigt dieses Ja Gottes zur Welt und zum Volk verkündigen."<sup>76</sup>

Because Jeremiah stood both on Yahweh's side and on the people's side, he experienced a terrific tension in his life. "God and people-- herein lies the tremendous inner tension of his life."<sup>77</sup> Between his own

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<sup>74</sup>Op. cit., pp. 38, 40; Weiser, op. cit., p. 76; von Rad, "Die Konfessionen Jeremias," op. cit., pp. 275-76; Cossmann, op. cit., p. 178, who thinks Jeremiah's suffering led to the later idea of substitutionary atonement.

<sup>75</sup>Cf. Buber, op. cit., p. 182; Sanders, Suffering as Divine Discipline in the Old Testament and Post-Biblical Judaism, pp. 68, 73-74, who states, "But from the depths God is the rescuer. His prophet has felt the power of the word tearing within him as His people will feel its power when it comes to pass. Jeremiah, in deep reflection, after facing God in his deepest despair, feels Him in his deepest humility. God comes to lift him from the bottom to be His servant." Cf. also von Rad, Theologie des alten Testaments, p. 216; Weiser, op. cit., XX, 201-02; J. Hänel, Die Religion der Heiligkeit (Gütersloh: Druck und Verlag von C. Bertelsmann, 1931), p. 241.

<sup>76</sup>Op. cit., p. 39; cf. also pp. 36-37.

<sup>77</sup>Kuhl, op. cit., p. 115; cf. also Volz, op. cit., p. 30; von Rad, Theologie des alten Testaments, p. 217; Skinner, op. cit., pp. 34, 48.

natural, patriotic feelings of love for his people and his commissioned message of doom and destruction his life was filled with intense inward agony. In the great prophets before him this tension had been largely concealed by the complete submission of the prophet to the divine will. But now there is

einen Zweispalt zwischen Jeremia dem Propheten und Jeremia dem Menschen. . . . Der heilige Groll der Gottheit durchdringt sein ganzes Ich,--und doch zieht ihm eben dieser Gotteszorn die Abneigung, ja, den Hass seiner Mitmenschen zu. Es ist etwas in ihm, das zwingt ihn immer aufs neue, sich in die Arme seines Gottes zu werfen, sein Wort zu ergreifen und zu künden,--aber ein anderes lebt ihm in der Tiefe des Herzens, das bebt und klagt unter dieser Last, das sehnt sich nach den Menschen, nach einem freundlichen Blick, nach einem herzlichen Wort. Zwei Seelen wohnen in seiner Brust, und auch hier will die eine sich von der anderen trennen.<sup>78</sup>

The so-called confessions of Jeremiah, unique in prophetic literature, show this great tension which existed between Jeremiah's own feelings and his prophetic task. These confessions illustrate the inner debate that Jeremiah carried on with the God who had overpowered him.<sup>79</sup> Jeremiah's stand on God's side is so strong that he frequently begs God to fulfill his vengeance upon his disobedient people (11:20; 15:15; 17:18; 18:21ff.; 20:12; cf. Hos. 9:14; Is. 2:9). Yet he bemoans the strife that he has caused in the land (15:10); he insists that he never wanted the day of disaster to come (17:16). He accuses Yahweh of being a mirage and a

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<sup>78</sup>Hertzberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 202-03; cf. pp. 157, 164, where he speaks of "ein Hervortreten des Menschlichen auf Kosten des Prophetischen."

<sup>79</sup>These confessions consist of 11:18-23; 15:10-21; 17:12-18; 18:18-23; 20:7-18. Cf. von Rad, *Theologie des alten Testaments*, p. 213. Sheldon H. Blank, "The Confessions of Jeremiah and the Meaning of Prayer," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, XXI (1948), 332, thinks the purpose of such confessions is to influence God in favor of Jeremiah and against his enemies. However, it seems rather that they simply reflect the intense inner agony which Jeremiah's office brought to him.

deceiver (15:18; 20:7). The intense suffering caused by his office makes him desire to withdraw from the people (8:23-9:2). His frustration becomes so great that he sinks into the depths of despair and curses the day of his birth (20:14-18). It is appropriate that his last confession ends in deepest woe; there is no resolution of the tension that pervades his life. The pain-producing doubleness remains until the end.

And yet precisely this doubleness in Jeremiah bears a powerful witness to the nature of God. As Skinner says,

We see that the controversy between Yahwe and Israel was reflected in his own consciousness, in a heart-rending conflict between his natural love for his nation and his sense of what Yahwe's righteousness demanded."<sup>80</sup>

In Jeremiah's great love for his people, in his frustration at the lack of success of his preaching, in his understanding of the necessity of destruction, in his despair over his own situation he is still the prophet of Yahweh, testifying to a corresponding suffering which fills the heart of his God. Knight says,

He feels to a degree shared by no other the tragic poignancy of the estrangement between God and his chosen people. . . . it is just this twofold sense in which the category of corporate personality can be applied to him that causes his being to echo to its depths the pathos which fills the heart of God.<sup>81</sup>

That Jeremiah's suffering is an important part of his message is shown by the prominence given to this aspect of his career as prophet of

<sup>80</sup>Op. cit., p. 218. Cf. also Buber, op. cit., p. 180, who speaks of Jeremiah as a creature "in whose personal existence the great discussion between YHVH and Israel and the fate resulting from it are consummated in personal condensation."

<sup>81</sup>Op. cit., p. 140. E. W. Heaton, The Old Testament Prophets (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1961), p. 49, states, "he had undertaken to bear in his own life the burden of God's grief at his people's sin."

Yahweh. He is like a lamb led to the slaughter, alone and forsaken, persecuted even by his own family (11:18-19; 12:6; 15:17; 16:2ff.). There are plots against his life, public humiliation, terror on every side (18:18,23; 20:1ff.,10). He barely escapes with his life after proclaiming judgment on the people (26:7ff.). Luther says of him,

Denn er ein elender, betrübter Prophet gewest ist, zu jemerlichen bösen Zeiten gelebt, Dazu ein trefflich schweer Predigamt geführt, Als der ober vierzig jar bis zum Gefengnis, sich mit bösen halstarrigen Leuten hat müssen schelten, und doch wenig nutz schaffen, Sondern zusehen, das sie je lenger je erger wurden, und inmer in tödten wolten, und im viel Plage anlegten.<sup>82</sup>

It is especially in the cycle of stories in chapters 37-45 that it is clear that Jeremiah's sufferings have a theological message to proclaim. This narrative, apparently written by Baruch,<sup>83</sup> is a unified cycle of stories, different from the previous isolated narratives. Jeremiah's sufferings are presented in a straightforward way, without any comforting words or oracles from Yahweh. All of Jeremiah's efforts to save his people inevitably end in failure, and he disappears from the scene in utter frustration, compelled against his will (and against Yahweh's will for the "remnant") to spend his last days in Egypt with a group of people who refuse to hearken to him. According to Kremers, this cycle of stories has one main theme: "Jeremia und seine Freunde versuchen vergeblich, Israel vor dem Untergang zu retten,--nur ihr eigener Untergang ist das Ergebnis

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<sup>82</sup>Martin Luther, Die Deutsche Bibel, series 3 in D. Martin Luthers Werke: kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1960), II. 1, 191-93.

<sup>83</sup>H. G. May, "Toward an Objective Approach to the Book of Jeremiah: the Biographer," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXI (1942), 140, 145-46, thinks Baruch was only Jeremiah's amanuensis; the "biographer" lived at least a century later. But this ignores the significance of Baruch in 43:3 and chap. 45.

ihres Kampfes."<sup>84</sup> The point of these stories is not Jeremiah's fame or bravery; his efforts gained no human success. Rather this series of stories comprising "die Stationen des Leidensweges Jeremias"<sup>85</sup> is designed to show that suffering was one of the primary elements of Jeremiah's divinely ordained office. Stamm says, "Sein Schdler Baruch sah im Leiden den wesentlichsten Zug am Amte seines Meisters; darum gestaltete er seine Erzhlungen nicht zur blossen Biographie, sondern zur Leidensgeschichte."<sup>86</sup> The ultimate theological message of Jeremiah's life of suffering is given in chapter 45, which is obviously placed at the end of the cycle of stories to give these stories their meaning.<sup>87</sup> Here Baruch records the oracle from Yahweh which was directed to himself:

Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, to you, O Baruch: You said, "Woe is me! for Yahweh has added sorrow to my pain; I am weary with my groaning, and I find no rest." Thus shall you say to him: "Thus says Yahweh: Behold, what I have built I am breaking down, and what I have planted I am plucking up, that is, the whole land. And do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them; for, behold, I am bringing evil upon all flesh, says Yahweh" (45:2-5a).

Here Yahweh gives answer to Baruch's suffering by referring to his own tremendous suffering caused by having to destroy that which he built. By this answer he tells Baruch (and Jeremiah) that they are sharing in God's own suffering; their own pain and frustration caused by the failure of

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<sup>84</sup>Heinz Kremers, "Leidensgemeinschaft mit Gott in Alten Testament: Eine Untersuchung der 'biographischen' Berichte im Jeremiabuch," Evangelische Theologie, XIII (1953), 130-31; cf. von Rad, Theologie des alten Testaments, p. 219.

<sup>85</sup>von Rad, Theologie des alten Testaments, p. 218.

<sup>86</sup>Johann Jakob Stamm, Das Leiden des Unschuldigen in Babylon und Israel (Zrich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1946), p. 72.

<sup>87</sup>Kremers, op. cit., p. 138, says, "Ohne Frage: Kap. 45 ist die Deutung der Leidensgeschichte Baruchs!" Cf. Weiser, op. cit., XXI, 386.

their task is part of Yahweh's own pain and frustration. Thus Jeremiah's passion history has this deep theological meaning: the prophet's life of suffering is a powerful revelation of the nature of Yahweh, who likewise suffers in the conflict between his love and the destruction which he must bring upon his people. As von Rad states,

Diese Gottesrede wird von einem Unterton der göttlichen Trauer begleitet; sie deuten fast ein Leiden an, das Gott über diesem Werk des Niederreissens des von ihm Gebauten empfindet. . . . es ist kein Wunder, wenn der Prophet und die, die um ihn sind, in dieses Einreissen Gottes auf eine ganz besondere Weise hineingezogen werden. Darum also verfolgt Baruch so gewissenhaft alle Einzelheiten dieses Leidensweges, weil die Katastrophe, in die Jeremia hineingezogen ist, eben doch nicht von ungefähr kommt, sondern weil sich in ihr das göttliche Einreissen vollzieht und weil hier ein Mensch auf eine einzigartige Weise an dem göttlichen Leiden mitgetragen hat.<sup>88</sup>

#### The Nature of Yahweh: His Painful Love

The tension which Jeremiah felt between his love for the people and his conviction that they must be destroyed points to a corresponding tension in Yahweh himself, a tension between his love and his wrath. Perhaps because of his own sensitive nature Jeremiah, like Hosea before him, lifts the veil that covers Yahweh's heart and reveals something of the struggle that is going on there as Yahweh works in judgment and grace with his people. In Jeremiah's own life this tension was never resolved, and he passed from the scene in utter frustration. In Yahweh likewise the tension is not resolved; wrath and love remain side by side until the end of Jeremiah's book. And yet Jeremiah hints that it is precisely

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<sup>88</sup>Theologie des alten Testaments, p. 220. Cf. also Kremers, op. cit., p. 138; Leslie, op. cit., p. 184; Buber, op. cit., p. 183, who says, "the way of martyrdom leads to an ever purer and deeper fellowship with YHWH. Between God and suffering a mysterious connection is opened."

because of this tension in Yahweh that there remains hope for the future of Israel. The destruction of Israel must come; but this in itself does not lead to salvation. Jeremiah has no idea that Israel's punishment will cause them to repent, or that their destruction will appease the divine wrath and so lead to their salvation. Rather it is in Yahweh himself that Israel's hope for the future lies. For the tension between Yahweh's wrath and his love causes indescribable suffering in his own heart, and (Jeremiah only hints at this) that suffering is redemptive. Thus the most profound reality about Yahweh, according to Jeremiah, is his painful love, his everlasting steadfast love which suffers pain in the conflict with his wrath and thus redeems his people. This painful love is described in some detail in Jeremiah.

Jeremiah's understanding of Yahweh's love causes him to go to great lengths in describing Yahweh's tender, long-suffering, extravagant care for his people in the past, along with his willingness to forgive and restore them even now. A favorite picture of Yahweh that Jeremiah uses is that of a man getting up early in the morning in his concern to get something done. Throughout the history of Israel Yahweh has been getting up early (*haškēm*) and sending prophets in his eagerness to call the people back to himself (7:13,25; 11:7; 25:3; 35:14; 44:4).<sup>89</sup> He took pains to plant Israel as a choice vine (2:21); he even wanted to carry out the very extraordinary practice of giving his daughter Israel an inheritance among his sons (3:19). He wanted Israel to live in as close a relationship

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<sup>89</sup>Cf. H. H. Rowley, The Faith of Israel: Aspects of Old Testament Thought (London: S. C. M. Press, Ltd., 1956), p. 91, who calls Yahweh's early rising "the yearning desire of God to reclaim the sinner."

with him as a man's waistcloth is close to his loins (13:11); with patience he waited and listened closely in hopes that he would hear an answer to his calling (8:6). He even closed his eyes to Israel's harlotry, for he thought, "After she has done all this she will return to me" (3:7). Even now Yahweh stands ready to do that which ordinarily he, in contrast with fickle human beings, would never do: change his mind and repent of his evil intentions for the people (cf. 1 Sam. 15:29) and show his love for them instead (Jer. 18:8; 26:3,13; 36:3; 42:10; 3:12,22).

Yet, without exception, all Yahweh's overtures of love prove to be in vain. Israel rejects her creator, preserver, father and husband. Their answer is always, "We will not" (6:16,17), "It is hopeless" (2:25). In spite of Yahweh's attentive listening, he hears no answer (35:17; 8:6); he finds no grapes to gather from his choice vine (8:13). The incredulity of Yahweh's disappointed love lends poignancy to the often repeated refrain, "My people have forgotten me" (2:32; 2:13,27; 15:6; 18:15). The result is that Yahweh's spurned love turns to hatred as he destroys his people in harsh judgment. His steadfast love and mercy are taken away from the people (16:5; 13:14); "She has lifted up her voice against me; therefore I hate her (śēnē'tîhā, 12:8b). As Eichrodt says,

But the very greatness of the offer is what makes the situation so perilous; for love that seeks the ultimate response, the surrender of the personal will, cannot but destroy those who resist it. Condemnation is always close at hand.<sup>90</sup>

In his hatred Yahweh now rejects his people (7:29) and calls them "this people" (6:21). He will no longer listen to them or to any of their

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<sup>90</sup>Walther Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, translated from the German sixth edition by J. A. Baker (London: S. C. M. Press, Ltd., 1961), I, 254.

favorite intercessors (11:11,14; 15:1), for now he loathes them (14:19) and is weary of relenting (15:6-7). He who in the past stretched out his hand in protecting his people now turns it against them (21:5; 15:6). The fierceness of his love turned to hatred breathes through the contradictory statement, "I have destroyed my people" (15:7b). Israel, once called Yahweh's beloved, no longer has any right in Yahweh's house (11:15-16).

The sentence pronounced upon it is a final sentence, yet delivered by the Divine judge with pain and with astonishment that He has to deliver it against His Beloved. . . . The Prophet feels the Heart of God as moved as his own by the doom of the people.<sup>91</sup>

Along with Yahweh's fierce anger at the rejection of his love comes a divine feeling of frustration. Yahweh's love has failed to bring about a response of love in the people. Thinking back to the early days of his people, when they were still his bride, he lays himself open to criticism: "What wrong did your fathers find in me?" (2:5). The divine helplessness in the face of Israel's persistent rebellion is echoed in the question, "How can I pardon you?" (5:7). In despair he asks the question that he knows can have only one answer, "How long will it be before you are made clean?" (13:27b). The complaint that is placed into the mouth of the people hits home with its revealing truth about the divine frustration:

O hope of Israel,  
 its savior in time of trouble,  
 why are you like a stranger in the land,  
 like a wayfarer who has turned aside to spend the night?  
 Why are you like a man confused,  
 like a mighty man who is not able to save? (14:8-9a).

Yahweh is confused and impotent in the face of Israel's rejection of him.

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<sup>91</sup>Smith, op. cit., pp. 210-11.

His love cannot save them; his hatred must destroy them.

Jeremiah becomes very graphic in picturing the inner anguish of Yahweh caused by the tension between his frustrated desire to save and his wrath which demands the destruction of his people. He suffers the hurt of a father whose daughter spurns his loving proposal to give her an inheritance among his sons; he only wants her to call him "father," but she will not (3:19-20). Even as Yahweh is destroying Israel, the pain he feels is expressed in his persistence in calling them "my people" (2:13; 6:14; 8:7,11; 9:6; 15:7; 18:15). The fact that he has to work evil at the very city that is called by his name (25:29) shows the tension between his wrath and his love. There is a hint of divine sorrow as Yahweh refers to the popular sayings: "It is Zion, for whom no one cares" (30:17); "Yahweh has rejected the two families which he chose" (33:24). The very fact that Yahweh calls Israel's destruction an incurable sickness (3:22; 8:22; 14:17; 30:12f.; 33:6) shows "Gottes verstehendes und mitleidendes Erbarmen."<sup>92</sup>

Jeremiah becomes very explicit in describing Yahweh's suffering as he records a number of laments uttered by Yahweh himself. In 12:7-8 Yahweh shows that his love is in conflict with his wrath:

I have forsaken my house,  
 I have abandoned my heritage;  
 I have given the beloved of my soul  
 into the hands of her enemies.  
 My heritage has become to me  
 as a lion in the forest,  
 she has lifted up her voice against me;  
 therefore I hate her (šēnō·tîhā).

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<sup>92</sup>Weiser, op. cit., XX, pp. XXXVI, 33; vol. XXI, 279.

Yahweh hates Israel and must punish her; but at the same time his love for her causes suffering for him.<sup>93</sup> Another lament by Yahweh appears to be in 10:19-20, where Yahweh mourns over the desolation of the land and the destruction of the people:

Woe to me on account of my hurt!  
 My wound is very grievous.  
 And I said, "Surely this is an affliction,  
 and I will bear it."  
 My tent is destroyed,  
 and all my cords are broken;  
 my sons have gone forth from me,  
 and they are not.<sup>94</sup>

Here Jeremiah affords a deep glimpse into the inner suffering of Yahweh as he must destroy his own people, but can do so only by wounding himself much more than he wounds them.

There are several other similar laments which appear at first glance to be laments of Jeremiah (4:19-22; 8:18-9:2). Yet it seems that, in Jeremiah's feeling of solidarity with Yahweh, he sometimes made no sharp distinction between his own words and Yahweh's words. Statements that were obviously spoken by Yahweh are included in these laments (4:22; 8:19b; 9:2); and the linguistic parallels between 4:19 and Yahweh's statement in 31:20b are striking. Therefore these two laments may be understood as at least in some way reflecting the sorrow of Yahweh's own heart:

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<sup>93</sup>On this passage cf. Kuhl, *op. cit.*, p. 117; Volz, *op. cit.*, p. 37; H. W. Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 183, who calls this "a pain which finds expression even as He delivers sentence."

<sup>94</sup>Weiser, *op. cit.*, XX, 91-92, thinks this passage is a lament of the people. Obviously it cannot be Jeremiah's own lament, for he had no children. However, it seems to attach to verse 18, where Yahweh speaks of the destruction he is bringing; and the idea of Israel as Yahweh's children is certainly a Jeremian thought (cf. 3:14,19,22; 31:9,20).

My anguish, my anguish (mē'ai)! I writhe in pain (ṣōhîlâ)!  
 The walls of my heart!  
 My heart is beating wildly (hômê lî libbî)! . . .  
 Suddenly my tents are destroyed,  
 my curtains in a moment. . . .  
 For my people are foolish,  
 they do not know me (4:19-22).

My grief is beyond healing [cf. LXX],  
 within me my heart is sick. . . .  
 Why have they provoked me to anger with their images,  
 and with their foreign idols? . . .  
 Because of the wound of the daughter of my people I am wounded,  
 I mourn, and dismay has seized me.  
 Is there no balm in Gilead?  
 Or is there no physician there?  
 Then why has there not been restored  
 the health of the daughter of my people?  
 O that my head were waters,  
 and my eyes fountains of tears,  
 and I would weep day and night  
 for the slain of the daughter of my people! (8:18-23).

These laments explicitly describe the terrible agony which Yahweh suffers because he must destroy that which he has loved and built up. In chapter 45, where Yahweh gives a reason for his prophets' suffering by simply referring to his own, the full depths of the inner conflict in God is seen. In reply to Baruch's complaint about the sufferings which Yahweh has made him endure, Yahweh comforts him by saying that his sufferings are only a reflection of the far greater sufferings in the heart of God: "Thus you shall say to him, 'Thus says Yahweh: Behold, what I have built I am breaking down, and what I have planted I am plucking up'" (45:4). The commission of tearing down and building up which was given to Jeremiah at his call (1:10) is actually Yahweh's own work of judgment and grace, and Yahweh suffers much more in carrying out these two contradictory aspects of his work than his servants can ever suffer. H. W. Robinson remarks concerning this passage:

Is there room for his own complaint, in the presence of the tragedy of God's defeated purpose for Israel, and all this means to God? . . . There is hardly a passage in the Old Testament which gives us a more impressive glimpse of the eternal cross in the heart of God, the bitterness of His disappointment with man.<sup>95</sup>

The tension between wrath and love which causes this indescribable suffering in God is not resolved in the book of Jeremiah. Both wrath and love remain to the end of Jeremiah's testimony about God, and therefore suffering remains. Yet Jeremiah, with divinely revealed insight into the heart of God, records a glorious oracle in chapter 31 which shows that precisely because of the divine suffering there is hope for the future of Israel. God's everlasting love (31:3) continues to battle with his wrath, producing an intense pain in Yahweh's heart; out of this pain comes the salvation of Israel. Yahweh says in 31:21:

Is Ephraim my dear son?  
Is he my darling child?  
For as often as I speak against him (dabb<sup>e</sup>rî bô),  
I surely remember him still (zākōr 'ezk<sup>e</sup>rennû 'ôd).  
Therefore my inward parts are pained for him (hāmû mē'ai lô);  
I must have mercy on him (rahēm 'arah<sup>a</sup>mennû).

Even as Yahweh punishes Israel, as he must do because of his wrath, he "remembers" him; zākār here means "remember graciously."<sup>96</sup> The verb hāmâ literally means "growl," "be in commotion." It is used for intense sorrow of the heart in Isaiah 16:11 and Jeremiah 48:36. In Jeremiah 4:19 this verb is used in the phrase, hōmê lî libbî, apparently meaning, "My

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<sup>95</sup>Op. cit., p. 186. Cf. also Leslie, op. cit., p. 184; Buber, op. cit., p. 167; Skinner, op. cit., pp. 346-48; Sanders, Suffering as Divine Discipline in the Old Testament and Post-Biblical Judaism, p. 70; and Smith, op. cit., p. 230, who says that Jeremiah "reads in the heart that was in him the Heart of God Himself--the same astonishment that the people are so callous, the same horror of their ruin, nay the same sense of failure and of suffering under the burden of such a waste."

<sup>96</sup>Cf. Weiser, op. cit., XXI, 289.

heart is beating wildly." Therefore Luther is justified in translating Jeremiah 31:20b: "Darum bricht mir mein Hertz gegen im."<sup>97</sup> Kitamori uses this passage as the basis of his "theology of the pain of God"; he points out that this passage depicts the great conflict in Yahweh, and the suffering caused by it.<sup>98</sup> And precisely out of this divine suffering comes the salvation of his people; using the infinitive absolute to show the compulsion of this result, Yahweh says, "I must have mercy on him."<sup>99</sup> There is no human reason for this salvation; it comes forth from the suffering of God himself, the suffering which redeems his people.

Therefore the redemptive power of the suffering love of God as it is revealed in this passage is an eloquent witness to the cross of Christ. Kitamori states, "Jeremiah states here that God still loves Ephraim, who rebelled against God, and the Love toward sinners who rebel against Him is the Love revealed in the Cross of Christ."<sup>100</sup> It is in this final outcome of God's own suffering that all of Jeremiah's oracles of salvation have their basis. It is because Yahweh, by his own suffering, has redeemed his people that he can say, "And it shall come to pass that, as I

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<sup>97</sup>Luther, op. cit., p. 295.

<sup>98</sup>Kazoh Kitamori, "The Theology of the Pain of God," Japan Christian Quarterly, XIX (Autumn, 1953), 318; he points out that Calvin used the word dolor in this passage. For a convenient summary of Kitamori's major theological emphases (most of his writings are not translated) see Richard Meyer, "Toward a Japanese Theology: Kitamori's Theology of the Pain of God," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXIII (May, 1962), 263. Volz, op. cit., p. 49, remarks, "Nun kann Gott nicht mehr länger an sich halten."

<sup>99</sup>Cf. Leslie, op. cit., p. 105, who translates this phrase: "I must deal with him in boundless compassion."

<sup>100</sup>Op. cit., p. 318.

have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy and bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and to plant" (31:28).

Thus the theological key to the juxtaposition of judgment and grace in the prophetic preaching is seen to be the suffering love of God.

Weiser sums this up admirably:

In der gedanklich nicht mehr aufzulösenden Spannung zwischen Gottes Zorn (Gerechtigkeit) und Liebe liegt für Jeremia das letzte Geheimnis göttlichen Wesens und Waltens umschlossen, dessen Tiefe der Prophet in Gericht und Aufrichtung, leidend und ringend und gehorchend zugleich als Belastung ein seltener Blick in Gottes eigenes Herz: Dort ist der eigentliche Punkt, an dem die entscheidende Wendung der Heilsgeschichte sich vollzieht, indem Gott seinen Zorn durch die Liebe in sich selber überwindet und die zerstörende Macht des Gerichts immer wieder umwandelt in die heilenden Kräfte mitleidenden Erbarmens. . . . Auf der lebendigen Dynamik dieses innergöttlichen Vorgangs und ihrer Auswirkung in der Geschichte beruht letztlich das merkwürdige Nebeneinander und Ineinander der Verkündigung von Gericht und Heil bei Jeremia.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup>Op. cit., XX, pp. XXXII-XXXIII.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SUFFERING LOVE OF GOD

#### The Relationship Between Judgment and Grace

On the basis of the discussion in the previous chapters, the relationship between judgment and grace in the prophetic proclamation of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah may be summarized in this way: the prophets proclaim that Yahweh is coming both in judgment and in grace; there is no toning down of either, but total judgment and total grace stand side by side in extreme tension. Yet they have a deep unity in the very nature of God, as he works in wrath and love to carry his purpose to completion.

Many scholars find bridges in the message of these four prophets which lead from judgment to salvation and thus resolve the tension. The major "bridges" that have been proposed are the idea of the remnant (Amos and Isaiah); the idea of the judgment as disciplinary, leading the people to repentance (Hosea and Jeremiah); and the idea that the judgment has a purging effect on the people, destroying the sinners and purifying the pious people (Isaiah). All these ideas have the same effect; they soften the harshness of Yahweh's judgment by making it a means through which salvation comes.

It is certainly true that the prophets saw Yahweh's working in judgment as a part of his total activity to achieve salvation for his people. However, they constructed no bridges leading from judgment to salvation which, in the final analysis, make judgment and salvation the same thing.

The remnant was not, as Jacob, for example, says, seen "as the bridge joining the threat of punishment to the promise of restoration."<sup>1</sup> Amos used the idea of the remnant simply as a means of portraying the complete destruction of Israel. Isaiah used the remnant idea in a number of ways: he used it as a witness to complete destruction; he used it as a dialectical conception testifying both to Yahweh's judgment and to his grace at the same time; and he also used the remnant idea as a designation for the people of God in the messianic era. However, in none of these usages does the idea of the remnant become a bridge from judgment to salvation. Even the last stump of Israel dies in the total destruction, and Yahweh revives the "remnant" of the messianic age by a new act of creation. In like manner, Hosea and Jeremiah did not proclaim the judgment of Yahweh as a disciplinary measure designed to lead the people to repentance and thus enable Yahweh to give them salvation. On the contrary, they were convinced that the people's enslavement to sin made it impossible for them ever to repent; there had to be a radical break brought about by a total judgment. The same holds true of the supposed idea of a purifying judgment in Isaiah's proclamation, in which the sinners would be destroyed and the purified pious people would receive salvation. Isaiah made no distinction between the sinners and the pious persons among the people of Israel; the whole people had become dross, and therefore the judgment would be total. Thus these four prophets had no ideas that would mitigate

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<sup>1</sup>Edmond Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament, translated by Arthur W. Heathcote and Philip J. Allcock (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1958), p. 324. Cf. R. de Vaux, "Le 'reste d'Israël' d'après les prophètes," Revue Biblique, XLII (1933), 538.

the harshness of the judgment or ease the tension between judgment and grace.

The prophets preached the judgment in its full harshness. Amos based the judgment especially on the ethical failures of the people; their sins against one another amounted to rebellion against Yahweh. Hosea and Jeremiah reached beyond the individual sins of the people and based the judgment on the sinful habitus of the people; because they were enslaved to a spirit of harlotry, because they were bound in a state of perpetual backsliding, the final judgment of God must come. Isaiah saw the basic sin of the people in their hybris, their refusal to rely completely on Yahweh and their insistence on depending on their own ability. For all four prophets, the net result of the people's condition was rejection of Yahweh; the judgment was inevitable.

The reality of the election of Israel as Yahweh's own people was closely connected with the reality of the judgment. The prophets agreed that Israel was indeed an elect nation. But they pointed out, contrary to popular belief, that this election was the basis, not of comfortable security, but of fierce judgment at the hands of the very God who had elected them. In this connection the prophets used the idea of the day of Yahweh, which the people envisioned as the day when Yahweh would destroy all Israel's enemies; the prophets turned this idea against Israel and proclaimed that the great destruction would start at Yahweh's own house. Their closeness to Yahweh ensured not their protection but their destruction.

The type of judgment which Yahweh was bringing differed according to the various situations in which the prophets delivered their message.

One frequent idea was that the people's own hardness of heart was a part of Yahweh's judgment on them. The prophets also used natural disaster, foreign invasion, and eschatological convulsions in their proclamation of judgment. But always their message of judgment was theologically orientated: "I, Yahweh," was ultimately the one wreaking judgment on the people.

Placed starkly alongside the proclamation of complete destruction was the proclamation of full, unconditional salvation. This does not mean that the force of the judgment was in any way softened; as Eichrodt states,

The eschatological hope of salvation does nothing to limit the seriousness of the judgment; on the contrary, it is what gives it its full severity. For this hope looks for a genuine new creation by Yahweh after the old order has been totally destroyed.<sup>2</sup>

Just as the full salvation proclaimed by these prophets establishes the severity of the judgment, so also the full judgment serves to set the total salvation off in stark colors. One of the most characteristic expressions used by the prophets is šûb šebû't, perhaps best taken in the idea of restoring the fortunes of the people.<sup>3</sup> "Die Propheten kündigen eine durch Jahwes Eingreifen herbeigeführte neue Wendung der Geschichte an."<sup>4</sup> It is important that Yahweh is the sole author of this restoration

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<sup>2</sup>Walther Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, translated from the German sixth edition by J. A. Baker (London: S. C. M. Press, Ltd., 1961), p. 379.

<sup>3</sup>Jacob, op. cit., p. 320, compares this phrase with the apokatastasis pantōn of Acts 3:21. Eberhard Baumann, "שׁוּב שְׁבוּת: Eine exegetische Untersuchung," Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, LVII (1929), 29ff., argues that it means, "Schuldhaft rückgängig machen."

<sup>4</sup>Richard von Hentschke, "Gesetz und Eschatologie in der Verkündigung der Propheten," Zeitschrift für evangelische Ethik, IV (1960), 47.

of Israel; it is full and unconditional, with no ethical requirements on the part of the people. It is a new creation by Yahweh out of the total destruction. The proclamation of this salvation reaches its climax with the idea of a new covenant between Yahweh and his people, in which he gives to his people a new heart so that they are able to respond to him in the full covenant relationship. But the tension between judgment and grace remains even in the proclamation of salvation, as von Rad shows:

Sie the prophets gehen aus von dem Nein Jahwes über ihr zeitgenössisches Israel, von seinem Verhältnis zu Jahwe, das von langer Hand heillos zerrüttet war. Aber sie waren gewiss geworden, dass Jahwe jenseits des Gerichts, durch neuen Taten, ein Heil begründen werde.<sup>5</sup>

Thus these prophets give full play to both judgment and grace; the two activities of Yahweh stand side by side in the prophetic oracles without any mitigation of either. There is a terrible tension between the two; from man's viewpoint they are utterly contradictory. As Roehrs points out, heathen religions are unable to reconcile these irreconcilables into one God: "It demonstrates man's tendency to make God in the image of his disharmonious confusion." And yet, Roehrs says, "This unity exists in God without a compromise of His holiness or of His love."<sup>6</sup> ✓

Thus the double aspects of judgment and grace are seen to be deeply based in God's own nature: "In the Bible He expresses and reveals Himself and His relationship to us in the same unfathomable 'doubleness' of His holy

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<sup>5</sup>Gerhard von Rad, Theologie des alten Testaments (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1960), II, 196.

<sup>6</sup>Walter R. Roehrs, "The Unity of Scripture," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXI (May, 1960), 299.

judgment and loving acts of redemption and salvation."<sup>7</sup> Therefore the oracles of judgment and grace can stand side by side in the prophetic preaching. Indeed, they must be juxtaposed, for they bear witness to the God who comes in both judgment and grace. While great tension exists between the oracles of judgment and those of grace, they have their unity in the redemptive activity of God. "Totales Gericht und totale Rettung--beides lag in der Konsequenz dieses so gearteten Gottesglaubens."<sup>8</sup>

#### The Pain of Men Witnesses to God's Pain

Judgment and grace have their profound unity in the divine nature. Yet even there the tension between the two is not resolved but causes suffering for God. And, since the prophets were taken up into God's own activity of judgment and grace, the tension between these two caused

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid.; Roehrs further states (p. 300): "Because the Christian is what he is, he finds in this 'double' and yet single Scripture that which answers to the mysterious double-mindedness which he senses." Law and Gospel solve the contradiction which he finds in his inmost being.

<sup>8</sup>Franz Hesse, "Amos 5:4-6:14f.," Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, LXVIII (1956), 16. For the unity of God's redemptive activity in judgment and grace cf. especially Otto J. Baab, Prophetic Preaching: A New Approach (New York: Abingdon Press, 1958), who says, "Only as Judge can he save, and only as Savior can he judge. These two roles are basically inseparable. . . . They express in their interrelationship the redemptive activity of God." See also Volkmar Hertrich, Amos der Prophet Gottes (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1941), p. 53; Hentschke, op. cit., p. 48; Th. C. Vriezen, An Outline of Old Testament Theology, translated from the Dutch second edition by S. Neuijen (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), pp. 273-74; Ludwig Köhler, Old Testament Theology, translated from the German third edition by A. S. Todd (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957), pp. 218ff.; J. Philip Hyatt, Prophetic Religion (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1947), p. 114; G. Ernest Wright, "Interpreting the Old Testament," Theology Today, III (July, 1946), 189; Jim Alvin Sanders, The Old Testament in the Cross (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1961), p. 36.

suffering also for them. In the preceding chapters it has been shown that the sufferings of Yahweh's prophets, sometimes only hinted at, sometimes expressed in detail, bear testimony to the suffering love of God.

Yahweh did not merely speak his word through the mouth of the prophets; he used the total being of each prophet, body and personality and emotions and life, in his work of judgment and grace among his people. In the case of each of the four prophets discussed above, Yahweh called the prophet specifically to his task, revealing to him the basic outline of the divine activity in judgment and grace. The prophet was given a share in this activity. By the proclamation of the dynamic prophetic word, by the visible means of symbolic actions, by the suffering at the hands of a hostile people the prophet was sharing with Yahweh in his redemptive activity. Therefore, as Robinson points out, the prophets had a sense of corporate personality not only with Israel but also with the council of Yahweh and even with Yahweh himself.<sup>9</sup> The prophet, united with Yahweh in his office, was really Yahweh's personal representative among his people. As Johnson says, "The prophet was commonly thought of as the מַלְאָכִי ("Messenger") of Yahweh par excellence, and might himself be virtually indistinguishable from Him in certain circumstances." The prophet was, according to Johnson, a member of the intimate council of Yahweh; and, as Yahweh's representative on earth "for the time being he was an active 'Extension' of Yahweh's Personality and, as such, was

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<sup>9</sup>H. Wheeler Robinson, Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1946), pp. 169-70. Cf. also H. Wheeler Robinson, "The Psychology and Metaphysic of 'Thus Saith Yahweh,'" Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, XLI (1923), 10.

Yahweh--'in Person.'"<sup>10</sup> This does not mean that the prophets had some kind of mystical union with Yahweh; the direction of the movement was from Yahweh to them. He was the sole initiator. Lindblom shows how prophetic religion differs from mysticism:

Die Religion der Propheten ist eine Religion der Extramanenz, nicht eine Religion der Immanenz, eine zirkumspektive Religion, nicht eine introspektive Religion. . . . Jahwe ist der Gott der Geschichte, nicht der Gott des seelischen Innenlebens.<sup>11</sup>

In contrast with the mystics, who strove for passionless apathy in the absorption of their personalities, the prophets' self-surrender to Yahweh actually enhanced their own personalities; for Yahweh made full use of the individual personality of each prophet, with his characteristic feelings and emotions.<sup>12</sup>

The prophetic office caused suffering for the prophets primarily because they both shared in God's will and purpose and also were fellow members of the sinful people who stood under Yahweh's judgment. As North remarks,

The prophets could never for long lose sight of their relation as fellow-members of the body, of the nation whose destruction they

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<sup>10</sup>Aubrey R. Johnson, The One and the Many in the Israelite Conception of God (Second edition; Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1961), pp. 32-33; in support of this he cites Is. 22:15ff. (the change from the third person to the first person) and Jer. 9:1f. (the change from Jeremiah speaking to Yahweh). Cf. also James F. Ross, "The Prophet as Yahweh's Messenger," Israel's Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg, edited by Bernard W. Anderson and Walter Harrelson (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1962), pp. 102-03.

<sup>11</sup>Joh. Lindblom, "Die Religion der Propheten und die Mystik," Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, LVII (1939), 73. Cf. also Christopher R. North, The Old Testament Interpretation of History (London: The Epworth Press, 1946), p. 174.

<sup>12</sup>Cf. Harold Knight, The Hebrew Prophetic Consciousness (London: Lutterworth Press, 1947), pp. 95-96, 100, 133.

were bidden to announce, whose sufferings they themselves must share even while they shared the pathos of God. Theirs must have been a soul-shattering experience; they were in a strait betwixt two, belonging in a measure to both.<sup>13</sup>

Along with the suffering which was theirs because of the conflict between their natural desires for the people and their knowledge of the inevitable judgment, the prophets also, in a measure, entered into Yahweh's sacrificial suffering for the redemption of the people. In themselves, as representatives of the people, the redemptive activity of judgment and grace was fulfilled. These prophets were thus forerunners of the servant of Yahweh who, according to the great prophet of the exile, would suffer for the redemption of the people.<sup>14</sup> "The highest level of spirituality is revealed in that passionate love which recklessly puts itself into the place of others, feels the stab of their pain and suffers the shame of their sin."<sup>15</sup>

It is clear especially from Hosea and Jeremiah that the suffering of the prophets is actually intended by Yahweh to be a witness to his own suffering love. Since the pain the prophets experienced was caused by their actual sharing in God's redemptive activity, that very pain (recorded extensively in Jeremiah) becomes an eloquent witness to the sacrificial suffering in the heart of God himself. Kitamori feels that pain is the uniting point between God and man; he thinks, for example, that the

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<sup>13</sup>Op. cit., p. 174; cf. Baab, op. cit., pp. 21-22.

<sup>14</sup>The idea of sacrificial suffering reaches its deepest point in the Old Testament in Deutero-Isaiah's description of the suffering servant of Yahweh; this, however, is beyond the scope of this study.

<sup>15</sup>Knight, op. cit., p. 147.

Japanese appreciation of tsurasa, the intense inner pain caused by a struggle within oneself, helps them to grasp the depth of the pain of God.<sup>16</sup> North goes so far as to make the suffering of the prophets a witness to the incarnation of Christ: "The highest Old Testament anticipation of the Incarnation is to be found in the prophetic consciousness, and specifically in the prophets' sympathy with the divine pathos."<sup>17</sup>

#### The Passibility of God

In the previous chapters it was shown that each of the four prophets testified that Yahweh suffered in his people's rejection of him and in the conflict between his wrath and his love. The prophets used anthropopathic terms and conceptions in revealing the nature of Yahweh, and this paper has followed their lead in ascribing feelings and emotions to God. However, in view of the philosophical developments that have occurred since the prophets wrote their witness of Yahweh, a brief discussion of the passibility of God is required here.

The early Christian church rejected patripassianism (the doctrine that God the Father suffered in Christ) as a christological heresy. The classical theology of the middle ages, using the Greek idea of God which considers change to be an indication of imperfection, rejected the idea that God could have any feelings or emotions. St. Thomas Aquinas gave the classical formulation of God as pure act:

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<sup>16</sup>Cf. Richard Meyer, "Toward a Japanese Theology: Kitamori's Theology of the Pain of God," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXIII (May, 1962), 265-66, 270.

<sup>17</sup>Op. cit., p. 190; cf. p. 176.

Primo quidem, quia supra ostensum est esse aliquod primum ens, quod Deum dicimus; et quod huiusmodi primum ens oportet esse purum actum absque permixtione alicuius potentiae, eo quod potentia simpliciter est posterior actu. Omne autem quod quocumque modo mutatur, est aliquo modo in potentia. Ex quo patet quod impossibile est Deum aliquo modo mutari.<sup>18</sup>

The definition of God as pure act, without the admixture of any potency, is designed to safeguard God from being in any way changeable. Therefore the passibility of God must be inconsistent with the idea of God as pure act, for changes in the experiences of feeling imply potentiality.

Mozley, in recording the history of this doctrine, shows that the idea of the impassibility of God held sway before the reformation; but in modern theology there is a strong reaction against this doctrine.<sup>19</sup>

The strong insistence on the impassibility of God preserves the absolute character of God at the expense of the living God. Tillich, for example, says:

Potentiality and actuality appear in classical theology in the famous formula that God is actus purus, the pure form in which everything potential is actual, and which is the eternal self-intuition of the divine fullness (pleroma). In this formula the dynamic side in the dynamic-form polarity is swallowed by the form side. Pure actuality, that is actuality free from any element of potentiality, is a fixed result; it is not alive. . . . The God who is actus purus is not the living God. It is interesting that even those theologians who have used the concept of actus purus normally speak of God in the dynamic symbols of the Old Testament and of Christian experience. This situation has induced some thinkers—partly under the influence of Luther's dynamic conception of God and partly under the impact of the problem of evil—to emphasize the dynamics in God and to depreciate the stabilization of dynamic in pure actuality. They try to distinguish between two elements in God, and they assert that, in so far as God is a living God, these

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<sup>18</sup>"Summa I, The Immutability of God. Question IX, Article I," Summa Theologiae (Ottawa, Canada: Commissio Piana, 1953), p. 46.

<sup>19</sup>J. K. Mozley, The Impassibility of God (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926), passim.

two elements must remain in tension. Whether the first element is called the Ungrund or the "nature in God" (Böhme), or the first potency (Schelling), or the will (Schopenhauer), or the "given" in God (Brightman), or me-onic freedom (Berdyayev), or the contingent (Hartshorne)--in all these cases it is an expression of what we have called "dynamics," and it is an attempt to prevent the dynamics in God from being transformed into pure actuality.<sup>20</sup>

Tillich himself prefers to unite both the dynamic element and the element of pure actuality in the assertion that God is "being-itself":

If we say that God is being-itself, this includes both rest and becoming, both the static and the dynamic elements. . . . The divine life inescapably unites possibility with fulfillment. Neither side threatens the other, nor is there a threat of disruption.<sup>21</sup>

Ultimately the prophets' use of anthropopathic expressions in describing God witnesses to the fact that he is a living person and therefore enters into a living relationship with his creation. Whatever philosophical system of thought is used, this truth must be kept. Therefore it seems best to adopt the language of the prophets and follow their lead in speaking of God "as sorrowing and rejoicing, loving and hating, pleased and angry, purposing and then modifying or changing His purpose." For, Robinson says, "the God of the prophets . . . is no changeless and impassible being, but a living Person, revealed through His activities as sufficiently like man to be known by him."<sup>22</sup> The prophetic testimony

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<sup>20</sup>Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), I, 246. He notes (p. 247) that the line of theological thought which tries to preserve the element of dynamics in God actually began with Duns Scotus, who elevated the will in God over the intellect.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 247.

<sup>22</sup>Robinson, Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament, pp. 189-90. Cf. Knight, op. cit., pp. 144-45, who says that the pathos of God is the personal expression of the ethical holy being of God."

plainly points to God's love and to his suffering as more than mere metaphors. The highest point in prophetic theology is reached with the proclamation that Yahweh's suffering love is redemptive and issues forth in salvation for the people. This is more than mere passionless sympathy; Robinson asks, "How can a God who is apathetic be also sympathetic?"<sup>23</sup> Since the salvation that the prophets proclaimed was based on the sacrificial love of Yahweh which entered into suffering for the redemption of his people, the passibility of God must be maintained as an essential part of his nature. "In spite of much Church doctrine, an impassible God is as impossible as a docetic Christ. In the last resort, the sacrifice is God's. . . . The final appeal of grace is in the suffering God."<sup>24</sup>

This means that anthropomorphic and anthropathic expressions are indeed a part of theological vocabulary. For, in the final analysis, all ideas about God that are comprehensible for human beings must be anthropomorphic or anthropathic. Heaton says, speaking of anthropomorphisms,

Too often, theologians have relegated nearly the whole of it to the nursery and Sunday School as "childish anthropomorphism" or "mere metaphor," as if to suggest that the adult mind can dispense with the use of analogy. Metaphor--mere metaphor--is all we have to help us communicate (both to ourselves and others) our understanding of God.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>H. Wheeler Robinson, The Cross of Hosea, edited by Ernest A. Payne (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1949), p. 24. Cf. also North, op. cit., p. 143, who says, "It is the veriest commonplace of present-day preaching that God suffers, and that a God incapable of suffering, or who declined to suffer, would be unworthy of our worship."

<sup>24</sup>H. Wheeler Robinson, The Cross in the Old Testament (London: S. C. M. Press, Ltd., 1955), p. 114.

<sup>25</sup>E. W. Heaton, The Old Testament Prophets (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1961), p. 102. Cf. Robinson, "The Psychology and Metaphysic of 'Thus Saith Yahweh,'" op. cit., p. 13.

Finally, the anthropopathic expression that God suffers is a witness to the suffering of the God-man Jesus Christ; the incarnation itself is the greatest expression of anthropomorphism.

### The Suffering Love of God

Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah all proclaimed Yahweh as a God who comes in judgment and grace. His wrath and his love both are at work to accomplish his purpose in his activity with the people. Judgment and grace have their unity in his own "double" nature. Yet the tension that exists between judgment and grace in the prophetic word indicates a tension in God himself between his wrath and his love. This conflict within God, described in all four prophets but especially in Hosea and Jeremiah, is the basis for the idea of "the suffering love of God." Each of the prophets described this suffering love in his own terms; for Amos, it was primarily a wrathful love; for Hosea, it was a love disappointed because of the people's rejection of it; in Isaiah it was a holy love; and in Jeremiah it was a love full of intense pain. But in each case it is the suffering love of God which stands behind the proclamation of both judgment and grace for the ultimate salvation of God's people.

The holy, righteous and jealous God comes to deal with his people in love. Love is an essential part of God's holiness, righteousness and jealousy. For it is God's holiness that insures the ultimate completion of his loving purpose of salvation for Israel (Hos. 11:9). God's righteousness, as this concept is used by the prophets, stands for the establishment of God's will; and that will is his loving purpose for Israel. As Knight says,

The righteousness of God is not an abstract principle such as would render retribution automatic. It pulsates with passion, and springs from the inmost depths of a perfect personal love which yearns with relentless persistence to make the beloved object worthy of communion with itself.<sup>26</sup>

Even God's jealousy (qin'â) is associated with his love and directed toward the accomplishment of his purpose of salvation for Israel (Is. 9:6; 37:32).<sup>27</sup>

However, the prophets tirelessly document the bitter fact that the people refuse to accept Yahweh's loving purpose for them. They reject his love; and, each of the prophets proclaims, that rejected love turns against the people in wrath and even hatred. God's judgment is not merely a legal process, brought about because his righteousness and holiness and jealousy tip the scales of justice against his sinful people. Rather, his judgment on them is the result of the people's rejection of his personal involvement with them in love; his wrath is the other side of his love.

As Eichrodt says, God has

at last come to the point of destroying from his side the relationship of trust which Israel has already defiled and falsified; and he does this not with the strict and icy indifference of a judge, but with the pain and anger of one whose suit for a personal surrender has been rejected.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Knight, op. cit., p. 147; cf. Jacob, op. cit., p. 101; Norman H. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament (London: The Epworth Press, 1944), pp. 70, 120-21; Friedrich Nötscher, Die Gerechtigkeit Gottes bei den vorexilischen Propheten (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1915), pp. 95ff.

<sup>27</sup>Cf. Eichrodt, op. cit., p. 210; G. Ernest Wright, God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital (London: S. C. M. Press, Ltd., p. 21; J. Hänel, Die Religion der Heiligkeit (Gütersloh: Druck und Verlag von C. Bertelsmann, 1931), pp. 74-79, 196-236; and Friedrich Kückler, "Der Gedanke des Eifers Jahwes im Alten Testament," Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, XXVIII (1908), 42-52.

<sup>28</sup>Op. cit., p. 380.

Because God's love is so closely tied up with his holiness, righteousness and jealousy, the rejection of his love by Israel means the destruction of Israel. For "wrath is but an expression of divine love in the face of man's sin,"<sup>29</sup> and therefore God's wrath also has the full backing of his holiness, righteousness and jealousy. But for that very same reason God's wrath never takes on a demonic, malicious character.<sup>30</sup> Even though the prophets at times reached into the area of demonology in describing the horrible judgment Yahweh was bringing, the basis of the judgment was always God's holy and righteous and zealous wrath. Tillich shows the close relationship between Yahweh's love and his wrath:

The wrath of God is neither a divine affect alongside his love nor a motive for action alongside providence: it is the emotional symbol for the work of love which rejects and leaves to self-destruction what resists it.<sup>31</sup>

The work of love is Yahweh's proper work; when it is rejected, it issues forth in wrath, God's alien work. ✓

Although God's love and his wrath are not opposites but two different

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<sup>29</sup>Knight, op. cit., p. 146. Cf. R. V. G. Tasker, The Biblical Doctrine of the Wrath of God (London: The Tyndale Press, 1951), p. V, who says, "Just as human love is deficient if the element of anger is entirely lacking (for as Lactantius wrote in the third century, 'qui non odit non diligit'), so too is anger an essential element of divine love. God's love is inseparably connected with His holiness and His justice."

<sup>30</sup>Julius Böhmer, "Zorn," Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, XLIV (1926), 321, argues that the different words used for wrath shows that the Old Testament writers were thinking of demons as agents of wrath. But Eichrodt, op. cit., p. 261, shows that Yahweh's anger never had anything demonic about it. Paul Volz, Das Dämonische in Jahwe (Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1924), pp. 4-41, shows that the prophets did make use of demonic ideas in reference to Yahweh; but there was nothing capricious about his activity.

<sup>31</sup>Op. cit., p. 284.

sides of the same thing, it does not follow that there is not tension between the two.<sup>32</sup> Each of the prophets witnessed that there was a tension of the most extreme sort between Yahweh's love and his wrath. His wrath decrees the destruction of his people, and his love demands that he show mercy upon them. Just as there was nothing to soften the sharp antithesis between God's activities of judgment and grace, so there is nothing to soften the tension between his feelings of wrath and of love for his people. The prophets, by their own sufferings and by their prophetic word, testified that the tension between wrath and love causes indescribable suffering in the heart of God. At some high points in prophetic theology they lifted the veil of Yahweh's heart (especially in Hos. 11:8; Jer. 45; 31:20) and revealed something of the terrible struggle going on there. As Schmidt says, in regard to the passages that speak of both Yahweh's love and his wrath: "so ist es ganz unmöglich Gott anders vorzustellen, als wie er selbst von tiefem Schmerz erfüllt ist: Er tut es mit zerrissenem Herzen, wenn er die Menschen schlägt."<sup>33</sup> The tension is never resolved; both God's love and his wrath continue. But the final outcome of the struggle is salvation for God's people. God simply lays his heart bare and, with the only basis being the very struggle going on in his heart, speaks the word that means full salvation and recreation:

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<sup>32</sup>Robinson, Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament, p. 133, says, "The revelation is of both judgment and grace, in the unity of an ultimately gracious purpose. There is no sense of antithesis between the two; Yahweh is 'a righteous God and a Saviour.'" Cf. Jacob, op. cit., pp. 111-12; and H. H. Rowley, The Faith of Israel: Aspects of Old Testament Thought (London: S. C. M. Press, Ltd., 1956), pp. 64-65.

<sup>33</sup>Hans Schmidt, Gott und das Leid im Alten Testament (Giessen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann, 1926), p. 39; cf. Knight, op. cit., p. 146.

"I must have mercy on him" (Jer. 31:20; cf. Hos. 11:9). This mighty word of grace then becomes the basis for the proclamation of salvation which, along with the proclamation of judgment, makes up the prophetic message.

The question which the prophets do not answer is this: precisely what was it that brought about God's ultimate decree of salvation for his people? It was not simply his steadfast love which brought about Israel's salvation, for his love was frustrated by Israel's rejection of him. Some scholars hold that, after an intense struggle, Yahweh's love overcame his wrath; with love as the victor and wrath defeated, Yahweh could once again turn to his people in full grace and bring them salvation.<sup>34</sup> However, the prophets said nothing at all about a victory of Yahweh's love over his wrath. Both love and wrath stand side by side until the end of the prophetic message. Wrath is not defeated and cast out, but it remains alongside love in Yahweh's heart. The tension is not resolved by a victory.

Instead, it seems that the very struggle itself issues in salvation for Israel. It is not the victory of love over wrath, but it is the suffering of God caused by the conflict between love and wrath that provides the basis for the salvation of his people. Thus God's suffering becomes a redemptive suffering. The suffering of the people of Israel could not atone for their sin and appease God's wrath; his holiness, righteousness and jealousy support his wrath and see to it that even the complete

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<sup>34</sup>E.g., Hentschke, *op. cit.*, p. 54, who speaks of the "innergöttlichen Widerstreits zwischen der strafenden Gerechtigkeit und dem Heilswillen Jahwes" and also of the "Sieg der Liebe Gottes über seinem Zorn."

destruction of the sinful nation is not sufficient punishment to make atonement. But in the very act of punishing his people God suffers much more than they can ever suffer. For he takes up their sin into his own circle of being, and it is this sin which causes the great conflict between his love and his wrath which results in his own redemptive suffering. As Robinson says, "As God's self-limited circle expands to take in that sin of the world which He cannot ignore, the sin becomes so much suffering for the Holy God--in no other way can it enter the circle of His holiness."<sup>35</sup> Or again,

Atonement now becomes something deep-based in the very nature of God, as natural to him as the forgiving love of a human saint. If it be true that in God we live and move and have our being, then our sins must somehow be conceived within the circle of his holiness. Yet how can they be conceived there save as suffering within the Godhead.<sup>36</sup>

Kitamori seems to be referring to this when he speaks of God as "wrapping" what is outside himself: "The Love which includes the extra."<sup>37</sup> It is the love of God toward the sinner that results in the conflict between Yahweh's love and wrath and causes the pain of God.

Thus it is not simply the elective love or the covenant love of God that brings salvation to his people. It is finally both love and wrath together; it is love made to suffer by its conflict with wrath that issues in the decree of salvation full and free. So the concept of the

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<sup>35</sup>The Cross in the Old Testament, p. 191.

<sup>36</sup>The Cross of Hosea, p. 55; cf. Knight, op. cit., pp. 138-39; however, Knight speaks (p. 148) of "a spiritual transformation of the fact of evil," which goes considerably beyond the prophetic message.

<sup>37</sup>Kazoh Kitamori, "The Theology of the Pain of God," Japan Christian Quarterly, XIX (Autumn, 1953), 320; cf. Meyer, op. cit., p. 268.

suffering love of God, as it was proclaimed by the prophets, demonstrates the ultimate unity of God love and wrath in his purpose of salvation—not a unity of peace and tranquility, but a unity of fierce tension and redemptive suffering. This valuation of wrath in God's purpose of salvation protects God's redemptive work from several misunderstandings. On the one hand, it shows that the immediate love of God, his natural affection for mankind, does not bring salvation to his people; this would make the cross of Christ dispensable. On the other hand, it is not the exalted sovereignty of God carrying through his purpose in history that produces salvation for his people;<sup>38</sup> this in effect would become a theology of judgment. Rather, it is the suffering love of God, which results from the full operation of both God's love and his wrath, that alone brings salvation.<sup>39</sup> Thus, in the final analysis, when the prophets testified to the suffering love of God, they were in a very real sense bearing witness to the cross of Christ. For in the cross the suffering love of God was realized in concrete form and with universal effectiveness.

#### God's Suffering Love and the Atonement

In Jesus Christ come together two lines of suffering which were discussed in the previous chapters: the suffering of man in God's service and the suffering of God himself. Christ suffers as the prophets did,

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<sup>38</sup>E.g., Sanders, *op. cit.*, p. 110, who says, "The same sovereignty of God is effective both for judgment and for salvation. Moreover, God as sovereign ruler never ceases to judge those whom he loves. 'God judges' means 'God rules.' . . . But in that very judgment, that very sovereignty, is our salvation. Outside it there is no salvation."

<sup>39</sup>Cf. Kitamori, *op. cit.*, pp. 319-20; and Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

and he suffers as God did; he unites both into one supreme passion as both a representative of the people and as God himself. The parable of the wicked husbandmen (Mark 12:1-12) shows he continues the line of suffering prophets; and God's own anguish is seen in his lament over Jerusalem's rejection of him: "We hear the anguish and the disappointment of unrequited love when Jesus speaks tearful words over Jerusalem."<sup>40</sup>

Thus Christ's own passion and death is the real content of the suffering love of God. The fact that the Old Testament witnessed to this suffering love of God provides one of the strongest possible links between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament understanding of God's suffering love should therefore prove helpful in understanding the atonement wrought by Christ's death on the cross.

The prophetic witness to the suffering love of God saw no legal transaction involved, no appeasement of God's wrath, no propitiation by the punishment of the people. Rather, it was in the suffering caused by the conflict between love and wrath in God that salvation for Israel had its irrational basis. This would suggest that the atonement wrought by Christ's suffering and death should be understood not as a legal transaction but more in terms of God's own suffering in the conflict between love and wrath. For the cross is the deepest symbol of both God's wrath and his love; this means that in Christ the terrific struggle between wrath and love is carried out.<sup>41</sup> Aulen has pointed out that the early church

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<sup>40</sup>Roehrs, op. cit., p. 293.

<sup>41</sup>Cf. Eichrodt, op. cit., pp. 471, 509; Sanders, op. cit., pp. 111, 117; and R. V. G. Tasker, The Old Testament in the New Testament (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947), pp. 38-39.

fathers generally held to what he calls the "classical" idea of the atonement, in which Christ fights and conquers the evil powers of the world. He shows that Luther also followed this view of the atonement; but Luther went beyond the early church fathers in seeing also the wrath of God as one of the "tyrants" over which Christ won the victory. Aulen states,

But though the Wrath of God is identical with His will, yet it is, according to Luther, a "tyrant," even the most awful and terrible of all the tyrants. It is a tyrant in that it stands opposed to the Divine Love. At this point the idea of God's own conflict and victory is brought by Luther to a paradoxical sharpness beyond anything that we have hitherto met; it would seem almost as if the conflict were carried back within the Divine Being itself.<sup>42</sup>

A quotation from Luther shows how he conceived of a struggle between God's love and his wrath, with wrath finally being vanquished:

Sic Maledictioni quae est Divina ira per totum orbem terrarum, idem certamen est cum Benedictione, hoc est, cum aeterna gratia et misericordia Dei in Christo. Congreditur ergo Maledicto cum Benedictione et vult damnare et prorsus in nihilum redigere eam, sed non potest. . . . Ideo si hanc personam adspexeris, vides peccatum, mortem, iram Dei, inferos, diabolum et omnia mala victa et mortificata.<sup>43</sup>

The witness of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah to the suffering love of God would support this "classical" view of the atonement insofar as it entails a conflict between God's love and his wrath, along with the irrationality and passion of such a struggle. But the prophets do not

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<sup>42</sup>Gustaf Aulen, Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement, translated by A. G. Hebert (London: S. P. C. K., 1931), p. 130. Cf. Philip S. Watson, Let God Be God! An Interpretation of the Theology of Martin Luther (London: The Epworth Press, 1947), pp. 116ff., 124ff.

<sup>43</sup>Martin Luther, In epistolam S. Pauli ad Galatas Commentarius ex praelectione D. Martini Luther [1531] collectus. 1535, series 1 in D. Martin Luthers Werke: kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1911), XL. 1, 440.

stress the victory of love; rather, they point to the struggle itself as the basis for Israel's salvation. In terms of Christ's atonement, this would mean that the stress lies not on the victory of God's love over his wrath (nor in the victory of Christ's resurrection over his death) but precisely in his suffering in the tension between God's love and his wrath.<sup>44</sup> Out of the conflict between God's love and his wrath, made real for all time in the cross of Christ, the suffering love of God effects the redemption of the world: "da [in Gethsemane] streydet Gott mit Gott."<sup>45</sup> Here lies the ultimate basis for the unity of the prophetic proclamation of judgment and grace.

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<sup>44</sup>This is Kitamori's position, although he leans toward the penal theory of the atonement; cf. Meyer, op. cit., p. 267.

<sup>45</sup>Martin Luther, "Vyl fast nutzlicher punkt Ausgezogen auss etzlichen Predigen des Gottes gelahrtn Doctoris Martini Lutheri 1537," series 1 in D. Martin Luthers Werke: kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1911), XLV, 370.

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